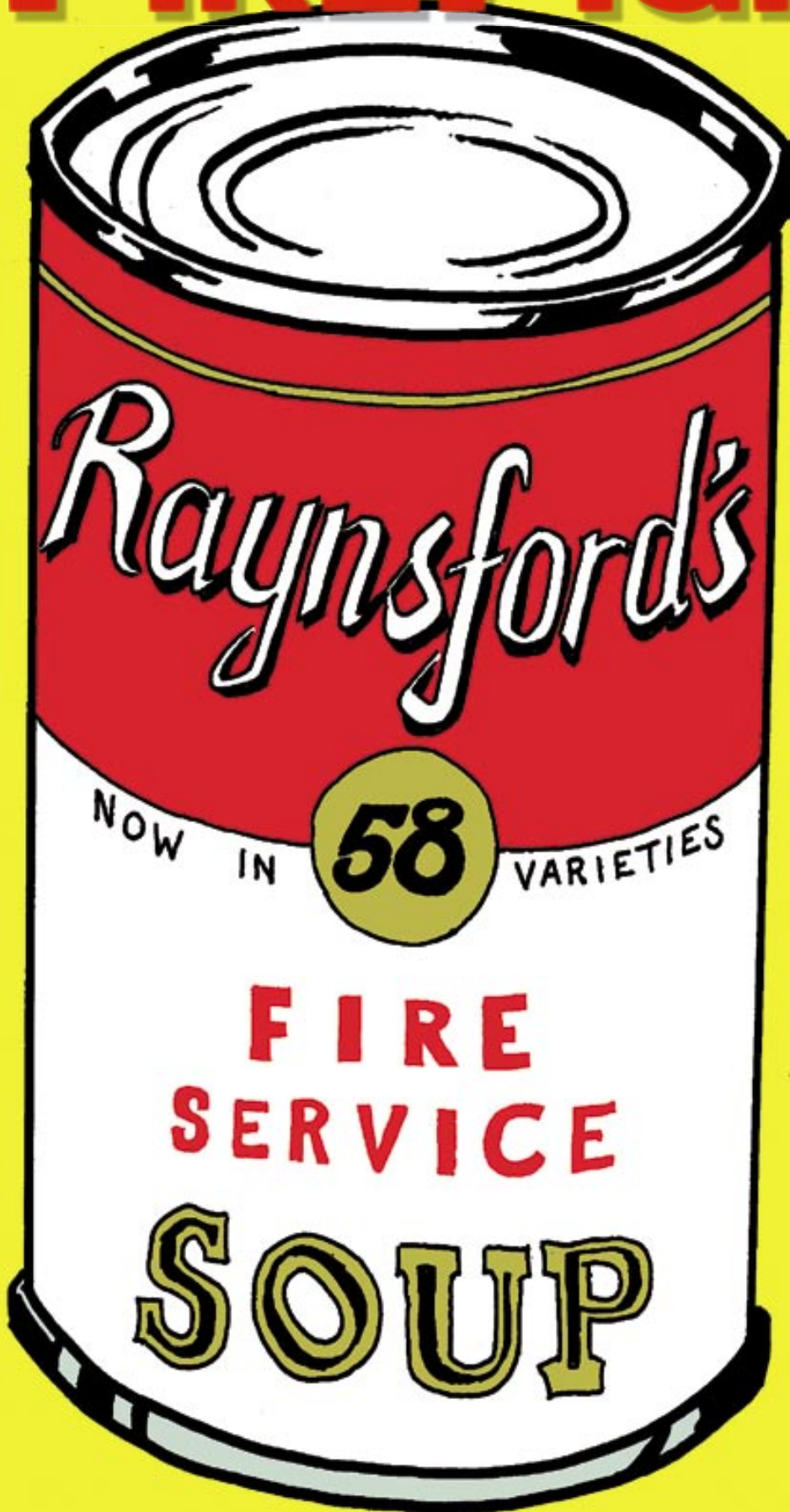
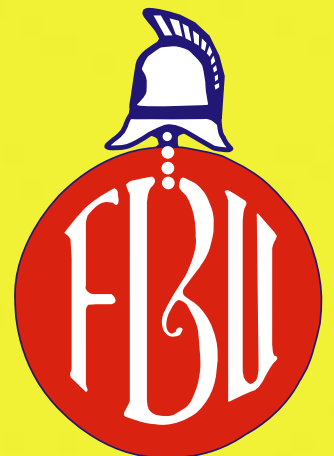


# FIREFIGHTER

APRIL 2005



**National  
standards,  
not 58  
varieties**



**Win one of 5 Apple iPod minis  
see page 3**



# Facing the challenges

**A**S WE head towards annual conference, it is important for the union to look at what we have achieved over the last year and what the challenges are for the year ahead. We also have to look at how we can do better.

To assist us we are carrying out a survey of members and discussing with brigade officials what we want to achieve and how we go about it. Conference will also take a view on that.

We have a new pay formula linking our pay rises to those of professional workers which will be paid from July. Contrary to some of the myths being touted, you will all receive the pay rise reached by the formula.

And we continue striving to win the best deal for all FBU members in the workplace, promoting their health and safety, while pushing hard in parliament, within the trade union movement, in the media and within the wider fire safety community to shape key policies for the fire and rescue service of the future.

On February 28 we held a seminar in the House of Commons entitled "Local Standards – A National Issue," in which MPs and a broad range of fire and rescue service stakeholders debated the issue of fire safety and the service's emergency response under the new risk management system. At the seminar we highlighted the current cuts agenda of local IRMPs – a concern voiced by legal experts, insurers and business representatives who attended – and argued, as a solution, for new emergency response standards focused on the health and safety of firefighters and the public.

IRMPs do not have to mean cuts. At present they are being driven in too many areas by a cuts-based agenda rather than a risk-based agenda. There is nothing new in cuts-based agendas in the fire service, we have faced them for years. But it does not mean that should always be the case in the medium to long-term.

Our demand for a proper risk-based national standard is now being taken up by a new expanded FBU parliamentary group, which is currently raising the issue with ministers. This new group of MPs is



Members should be proud of what they have achieved, confident about tackling the challenges of the future and give short thrift to the myth-makers who are trying to run down the union, says Andy Gilchrist

also pressing for urgent meetings with ministers over the proposals for change to fire service pensions.

Elsewhere in parliament, we have put ministers on the spot over the massively expensive and deeply flawed plans to regionalise emergency fire controls, the madness of which has been made plain to fire authorities and the public by documents – leaked to the FBU – that we have widely publicised. Opposition from a broad range of politicians, fire authorities and the public is formidable.

Meanwhile, our campaign to win equal pension rights for firefighters working the retained duty system continues apace – and is currently heading to the House of Lords. Our efforts at highlighting the recruitment crisis are showing results as a number of fire authorities start to recruit to the retained service. And thanks to pressure from the FBU, the NJC has launched a survey to ensure the 13.4% rise due to members working the retained duty system under the second stage of the June 2003 agreement is being honoured by fire authorities.

FBU members should also be aware that as part of our commitment to their health and safety, we have just launched an asbestos register, which is a record of members who believe they were exposed to the lethal dust while working in the fire and rescue service. It is important that the FBU has as many names as possible on the register to help those that are already ill or become ill in the future and need to make a claim. Again, details and forms to join the register can be found on the FBU website.

On pensions, we are working hard at all levels to do what we can to stop the Government's detrimental proposals for the Firefighters Pension Scheme and Local Government Pension Scheme. And I congratulate off-duty members for turning out for the February 18 pensions action and hope they keep pressing their MPs.

In short, we are not standing still – nationally or locally. This myth, spread by some in this union, that the FBU is no longer able to defend and promote

# Contrary to some of the myths being touted, you will all receive a rise reached by the pay formula – from July 1

your interests simply isn't true. Look at the ballot results in Lincolnshire, Merseyside and London. Look to Northern Ireland, where the FBU was the biggest contingent in a demonstration of public sector unions on February 18.

It is also a myth that we are today seeing unparalleled cuts under the IRMP process. There have always been moves to undermine fire cover – and FBU members' jobs – as the pages of losses and changes contained in previous annual reports amply demonstrate. Today we fight those cuts as we have in the past. Some we will win or partially win and some we will lose or partially lose, as we have in the past.

The fact is we are better equipped to deal with changes and cuts proposed in IRMPs than we ever were under the old Section 19 cuts and changes. We are training your representatives brigade by brigade. We are exchanging and sharing information in a way we never have in the past with a cutting edge online database that will be a tremendous resource for officials to improve on conditions locally. And backing this up, we have a training and education programme that is probably the best the union has ever had.

Members should be proud of what they have achieved, confident about tackling the challenges of the future. As important is giving short thrift to the myth-makers among the employers, chief fire officers and from within this union who are trying to run down the critical work this union is doing on your behalf and on behalf of your communities.



## Win one of five Apple iPod minis worth £125



AS AN incentive for you to return the membership survey form enclosed with this magazine, Thompsons Solicitors have kindly offered five Apple iPod minis in a competition linked to the survey.

Fill in and return the survey. Cut out the coupon below and enclose it in the envelope with your completed survey form. The coupon will be separated and returned to us independently of your survey, which will remain confidential.

Five coupons will be picked out of the hat and each of the five winners will receive an Apple iPod mini. If you have filled in an on-line version of the survey simply write 'YES' in the section titled "on-line" at the bottom of the coupon. Write in **CLEAR BLOCK CAPITALS** or we won't be able to send winners their iPods! One entry per member.

Name . . . . .  
Address . . . . .  
Post Code . . . . .  
E-mail address . . . . .  
Online . . . . .  
**POP THIS COUPON IN THE SAME PRE-PAID ENVELOPE AS YOUR SURVEY**



## INSIDE



## COVER STORY

### IRMPs

22

National standards, not 58 varieties was the union's message as it moved to shape a key aspect of the fire and rescue service agenda with a House of Commons seminar in February that brought together a variety of stakeholders to consider the union's IRMP strategy and fire safety policy

### Modernisation

16

The main thrust of the UK fire service modernisation agenda is cuts-driven, says Jack Ford, highlighting the stress faced by officers tasked with implementing change amid the service's new institutions and priorities.



STEVEN CANNON/REPORTAGE.CO.UK





*FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist and FBU members from Bridgend fire station near Cardiff at a ceremony to hand over the keys to the union's new national IRMP office at the end of initial construction*

## Arson 'at epidemic level' as government seeks to cut service

THE number of fires in the UK shot up from 519,000 in 2002 to 621,000 in 2003, a shocking rise of 20%, according to the latest statistics from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The service as a whole attended nearly 1.1 million fires and false alarms in 2003, up 10% on the previous year.

But the truly startling figures show a leap in the number of deliberately started fires between 1993 and 2003 although the recent trend is downwards.

In 1993 there were 80,200 deliberate fires with 115,100 in 2003, an increase of around 45%.

The way fires are reported changed from 1994, which make comparisons with 1993 difficult. But the figure for deliberate fires in 1994 was only marginally different from 1993 at 84,600 which would only knock a couple of points off the percentage rise.

One in four home fires is now started deliberately with 13,800 started in 2003, slightly less than the peak of 14,800 deliberate home fires in 2001. The number of deliberate vehicle fires has also leapt from 46,600 in 1993 to 72,900 in 2003 – an increase of around 60%.

The number of deliberate

vehicle fires now exceeds accidental vehicle fires – 19,900 in 2003 – by nearly four to one.

The total number of all deliberate fires appears to have peaked at 123,300 in 2001. The number of accidental fires dropped to 115,100 in 1993 and to 97,700 in 2003.

FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist commented: "One in four home fires is now deliberate, yet there is no target to reduce the number of deaths in these attacks. Targets only relate to deaths in accidental fires.

"The fire service is being stretched to breaking point. We are close to the point where the number of fires will outstrip the number of burglaries.

"For the government to want to cut the fire service with figures like this beggars belief. It needs joined-up government, a national strategy and money to fund it.

"We have an epidemic of vehicle fires. Even if the government hit its lowered targets for reducing deliberate vehicle fires, it would leave the numbers far exceeding the figures for 1993.

"They have no year-on-year targets. Where they have, these are targets for failure, not for success."

## PENSIONS, RANK TO ROLE AND CONTROL REGIONALISATION FIGURE AS OFFICIALS MEET TO DISCUSS UNION STRATEGY

PENSIONS, control and rank to role were discussed at length at an FBU brigade officials' meeting in London on 7 March.

General secretary Andy Gilchrist led the briefing and discussions on pushing forward the union's strategy.

Assistant general secretary Mike Fordham talked in more detail on rank to role.

National Officer Paul Woolstenholmes gave the details on pensions, national officer Geoff Ellis addressed the Control CARE campaign and national officer John McGhee discussed parliamentary work the union is doing to support these campaigns.

President Ruth Winters also made contributions.

The objective of the day was to ensure brigade officials are informed of the actions taken by the union at a national level in respect of these three key issues and for the executive council and national leadership to get the latest information on how

the membership feel about the issues.

It was also an opportunity for brigade officials to highlight to their colleagues in other brigades and to the general secretary, president and national officers the challenges they faced in leading and co-ordinating these campaigns locally.

There was a wide range of questions and contributions from officials from brigades across the UK. The views expressed and information provided by brigade officials will be reported back to the executive council at its next meeting and will help inform the decisions of the EC on these key issues.

There was also a brief demonstration of the facility for sending letters to MPs on the FBU website and the FBU pay and conditions database, which is building up a range of local agreements and policies that should soon make it a powerful tool for enhancing members' conditions.

# Union firm against employers' move to renege on agreement

The Union is standing firm against the latest move by the employers to renege on another agreement – this time on the new constitution of the national joint council

JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



*The FBU is standing by the recommendations made by ACAS Chair Rita Donaghy (above), a position backed by the consultative ballot of FBU members*

**T**HE employers' move is part of an attempt to weaken the FBU's position in the national pay and conditions bargaining machinery of the UK fire and rescue service by bolstering the flagging Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) and creating a 'stand-alone' national joint council (NJC) for middle managers.

In January 2004, Rita Donaghy, Chair of ACAS, the arbitration, conciliation and advice service, recommended revisions to the NJC constitution.

Her report was circulated to all members and formed a part of the union's consultative ballot. The EC subsequently endorsed the recommendations of the report, and informed the national employers of the union's decision.

At that time the national employers told the union that, while they agreed the report in principle, they had concerns about the working arrangements for the proposed middle managers negotiating body.

On 15 March 2004 Rita Donaghy wrote to the joint secretaries clarifying how she thought the middle managers negotiating body would operate.

A copy of her initial report and letter to the Joint Secretaries are available on the FBU website.

## **New demands on NJC constitution**

At a recent meeting with the employers' secretariat of the NJC, the union was informed that there were now three areas of recommendations in Rita Donaghy's report that the employers would not be prepared to endorse:

They wished the number of seats on both sides of the NJC to be increased from 12 to 14. This would lower the threshold on which both the Fire Officers' Association (FOA) and RFU

could gain a seat. The threshold would be lowered from 8.34% to 7.14%.

They now wish the proposed middle managers negotiating body to be a "stand alone" NJC for middle managers.

They wish to end the current provision in the constitution for either side of the NJC to refer a matter to ACAS for arbitration.

The national employers'

position represents a clear breaking of an agreement we reached with them under the chairmanship of Rita Donaghy in June 2004.

The employers' representatives on the joint working party consisted of the lead members of the employers' side, who verbally accepted the recommendations made by Rita Donaghy.

The national employers' action is a repeat of their behaviour on 2 August 2004 when they reneged on an agreement reached under the chairmanship of Brendan Barber, general secretary of the TUC, on "stand down" arrangements.

Their demand for additional seats clearly demonstrates that the RFU does not have in excess of 8.34% membership among employees of the UK fire and rescue service covered by the grey book, as the

proposal to lower this figure is designed solely to give the RFU representation.

This is in line with the promises made by some members of the national employers during the pay dispute.

Their demand to end the current provision in the constitution for either side of the NJC to refer a matter to ACAS for arbitration was at no time raised by the employers during the joint working party.

While the union was aware it was on their agenda, we did not feel it incumbent upon us to assist them to do their job professionally.

## **FBU committed to line backed by members**

The union has responded to this latest attempt by the employers to renege on an agreement by informing them that we remain committed to the position agreed by our membership through ballot, and as outlined in the report by Rita Donaghy.

The national employers have now agreed to recognise the RFU

and FOA at a national level for consultation purposes (although not on any issues covered by the grey book) and have reiterated their commitment

to securing representation for both the RFU and FOA within the national consultative bargaining machinery.

A copy of a letter sent to the RFU is available on the FBU website. The union believes a similar letter has probably been sent to FOA.

The union will continue to keep members and officials informed of developments.

***Move would lower the threshold at which both the FOA and RFU could gain a seat on NJC***

***Action is a repeat of behaviour when employers reneged on an agreement on 'stand down'***

## **Bid to prop up RFU after dispute promises**

Their demand for additional seats clearly demonstrates that the RFU does not have in excess of 8.34% membership among employees of the UK fire and rescue service covered by the grey book, as the



# Union demands NJC meeting over pay protection

THE union has called for a meeting of the National Joint Council after reaching an impasse with national employers over pay protection under the move to rank to role.

It has also urged brigade committees not to reach any agreement at a local level on this issue nor to participate in processes set up to implement the role-based pay structure.

The FBU stressed that no agreement has been reached between the union and national employers over the substantive move from rank to role because the union has rejected detrimental employer proposals on pay protection while a number of other issues are outstanding.

A circular with guidance on implementation issued by

employers on 16 February was a unilateral move and does not have the union's agreement.

The union said implementation should only take place once guidance on pay issues relating to assessment of competence for each role in the integrated personal development system (IPDS) pay structure and the assessment of job size for some of the roles has been agreed by both sides. This has not happened.

Under the June 2003 pay and conditions agreement, on 7 November 2003 members were assimilated from the old pay structure to the new one. The NJC emphasised that the assimilation exercise was for pay purposes only and this did not in itself implement the new IPDS pay structure.



That process, the NJC stated in a circular at the time, would take place over the coming months once all the appropriate national agreements and advice were in place.

That circular also said "it would be premature for them (fire authorities) to make final decisions at this stage on the longer term allocation of roles to existing jobs. This would not be appropriate until the completion

of negotiations in the NJC." Negotiations have not been completed.

If no agreement is reached at the meeting of the NJC the union has called, then the union will refer the matter to arbitration in line with the constitution of the NJC.

Members will be kept informed of any new developments.

■ More details are available on the FBU website (Circular 2005H0C0131MF)

## Member who developed pleural plaques receives £12,500 in compensation

A FIREFIGHTER who was exposed to asbestos while tackling farm fires when working for West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority and for Northumberland County Council received £12,500 last November in compensation after developing pleural plaques.

Fred Smith also regularly had to deal with fires at a shipbreaking yard in Blyth, Northumberland.

"Farm fires were quite a regular turn out," he said. "They would be mainly in outbuildings such as hay barns which quite commonly had asbestos corrugated roofs.

"These fires were tackled without the use of breathing apparatus. You simply tackled the fires by putting the hoses on to the fire when it was at its fiercest. It was common for the roof to explode around us or pop and collapse, causing the roof

structure to break up."

Once the main fire was out, Fred and his colleagues would go into the building to dampen down the fire. This could take a couple of days if it was a hay barn.

"We would be turning over the hay to damp down any hot spots. In amongst the hay would be the roof structure. We didn't wear breathing apparatus to do this".

Hughes, Bolckow's Breaking Yard in Blyth would break up old ships with asbestos-lagged engines and boiler rooms. Whether firefighters wore breathing equipment depended on how broken up the ship was.

Fred, a former engine room leading hand in the Royal Navy, was sent into a fire on a destroyer because of his knowledge of the layout of such vessels.

It is a cruel irony that for most

of Fred's career as a firefighter there would be asbestos gloves and blankets on an appliance, which required regular checks, yet only two sets of breathing apparatus.

Bryan Prudham of FBU lawyers Thompsons said: "Fred was exposed to asbestos in a number of ways during his career as a firefighter. As a consequence he developed pleural plaques. There is no doubt that this was an injury caused by the negligence of his employers.

"Yet if his claim had settled today he would only receive between £6,000 to £7,000 as a full and final settlement."

This is because of a High Court ruling in February that people who develop pleural plaques are entitled to compensation but that the money they can claim, previously £5-£15,000, should be reduced.

## ASBESTOS DATABASE

The FBU's asbestos database (*Firefighter Jan-Feb 2005*) is now up and running. Members can fill in the form on-line on the FBU website and send it electronically direct to our solicitors Thompsons, or print out a form from the site and send it by post. They can also request a form by ringing the FBU legal helpline – 0808 100 6061.

# FBU pilots e-learning for retained firefighters

THE FBU is to launch a key project to provide e-learning for FBU members, including those working the retained duty system.

The FBU's Union Learning Fund (ULF) and Scottish ULF project are working with the Scottish Fire Services College (SFSC), (Gullane), in a pilot project.

The initiative follows discussions between John McGhee, FBU national officer responsible, Morris Butterfield, retained EC member, Trevor Shanahan, ULF project manager and Jim Robson, principal of the Scottish Fire Services College.

The SFSC has been at the forefront of developing a virtual college that will provide online courses that meet the requirements of learners as they progress through the fire service role maps.

The virtual college has provided an e-learning environment for accessing a variety of fire service role-related modules over the last 18 months. These have included fairness and equality, health and safety and command and control.

The college gave the FBU's Trevor Shanahan access to the site and Jim Robson facilitated discus-

sions about the content, access and operating requirements of the e-learning platform.

The virtual college will open up learning access for all members of the UK fire and rescue service, especially those who cannot attend residential courses.

In particular, e-learning may prove to be a key initiative in supporting the retained service in the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS), workplace development schemes and S/NVQs.

In the pilot project two retained stations, one in England

and one in Scotland, will get access to two of the virtual college modules.

The FBU's learning centre and Scottish Union Learning Fund project workers will support the retained firefighters in any skills for life and information and communication technology (ICT) learning needs before and during their access to the modules.

The SFSC will play a key role in guidance on how to access the modules, provide online support through the college's e-mentor application and support them as they progress.

PHIL NOBLE/PA/EMPHICS



*Merseyside firefighters tackle a blaze in the Old Swan area of Liverpool*

## Duty system deal resolved under new procedures

THE union has agreed a new "flexi-time" duty system with Merseyside fire and civil defence authority making use of the NJC's new technical advisory panel (TAP) process.

The employers proposed a new duty system last year. It was rejected by the union, leading to a TAP hearing in January this year to resolve the dispute.

"This was the first TAP hearing under the new procedures and we managed to secure agreement on a duty system that was acceptable to the Fire Brigades Union," said brigade secretary Les Skarratts.

"The new system allows for leave taken as flexitime along with an increase in the time-owing rate that allows for further leave for



**Les Skarratts: first hearing under new procedure secured acceptable agreement**

our members.

"The new duty system agreement includes the right to take two days leave or four half-days leave in a one-month period on the day of the member's choosing, similar to the nine-day fortnight but with the added flexibility of taking

leave when our members want it rather than when the service allows it." The new Grey Book outlines the principles on which duty systems should be based.

Where local agreement cannot be reached between the fire and rescue authority and the recognised trade union, the difference can be referred to the TAP whose role is to seek agreement and, where that is not possible, to make recommendations. Professor Roy Lewis, who is assisted by the joint secretaries, currently chairs the panel.

■ Copies of the duty system will soon be available on the FBU grey book pay and conditions database, which is accessible to brigade officials from the FBU website.

## London FBU members take action on overtime issues

LONDON members have voted 73% in favour of industrial action in a ballot on the issue of overtime.

From 18 March until further notice no FBU member in the London region up to and including station officer level was expected to perform duties or activities which attract overtime or time off in lieu other than continuing their attendance at an emergency call past their core hours, nor perform an out-duty where, due directly or indirectly to the industrial action by other members, they have not been paid their fares in advance by a uniformed employee of the appropriate rank.

The union is calling on London Fire Brigade/London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) to withdraw the link between sickness absence control and eligibility for being considered for shifts of pre-arranged overtime.

In addition, it is demanding that where shifts of pre-arranged overtime are offered, the payment should be enhanced at weekends as with public holidays to double time rather than time and a half.

The Union also wants hanging-on at the end of shift to be voluntary for all ranks that are required to do so.



**F**BU members turned out in force on February 18 to press home their anger and concern about the Government's proposals to make detrimental changes to the Firefighters Pensions Scheme (FPS) and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

They joined thousands of trade union members in sister unions in the public sector – including teachers, nurses and civil servants – who were involved in this broad TUC-coordinated pensions campaign.

Emergency fire control staff and firefighters met MPs in their constituencies and joined activities organised in the regions by fellow trade unionists and the TUC.

The union, which is consulting on possible actions including strikes over the government's pension proposals, called on off-duty members to once again make clear their anger about the proposals on March 23 and show solidarity with other public sector trade unionists who plan hold a one-day strike on that day.

Below is a round up of how FBU members and officials took part in the February 18 pensions campaign day:

**Northern Ireland (R2):** Over 150 FBU members assembled at Belfast City Hall to join fellow trade unionists – including from Unison, TGWU, NIPSU and PCS – in protest at Government proposals for our pensions. This was followed by a meeting in Transport House Belfast where a packed hall was addressed by the leaders of the main trade unions, including from Northern Ireland FBU.

**East Midlands (R6):** Members and officials attended and spoke with other public sector union at rallies organised in Chesterfield, Leicester and Nottingham. Prior to the day the regions asked officials and members to contact their MPs and invite them to address a meeting or discuss the Government's pensions proposals. Those who could not see their MP on the day making arrangements to see him/her later. Initial feedback from MPs has been good.

**London (R10):** Members and officials attended a number of local meetings and rallies along with other trade unions, with speakers from the FBU contributing to rallies across London.

**Eastern England (R9):** Firefighters and control staff joined teachers and local government workers gathered on the Cornhill in Ipswich. Local representatives from the FBU, NUT, PCS, the TGWU and Ipswich Borough Council UNISON members, handed out leaflets and collected around 300 signatures in only an hour and a half.

**Scotland (R1):** Members and officials attended rallies in Glasgow, Dundee, Inverness and Lothian & Borders, with speakers from unions, including FBU, and trades councils. The Glasgow rally was attended by 50 odd FBU members and the Dundee Rally attracted over 80.

**South West (R13):** FBU members and officials turned out in force at rallies in Bristol, Gloucester and Plymouth. A large rally took place in the city centre of Bristol on college green where Avon FBU members rallied behind the FBU banner alongside members



# FBU members join campaign for pensions



*Members protesting  
in London (top), the  
South West (middle)  
and Northern Ireland*







of the GMB, NUT, Unison, PCS and the T&G. Further support was shown by fire appliances from Temple Fire Station. In Plymouth substantial numbers of FBU members from Cornwall and Devon attended the rally further supported by fire appliances from Green Bank fire station.

**Southern (R12):** There were demos in the region in Aylesbury, Bucks; Oxford, Oxfordshire; and in Slough, Berkshire. Members attended each of these demos. In Portsmouth control staff were joined by firefighters and other public sector workers in a large demo. Further inter-union initiatives are being discussed now between officials in the region for action between now and May.

All the rallies attracted substantial press coverage, boosting the campaign to protect our pensions. FBU speakers expressed the anger of FBU members on the attacks on their pensions and pledged solidarity with other public sector unions in their fight to defend pensions and improve provisions within them.

## LOBBY YOUR MP NOW!

NEW letters are now available for members to send to MPs to ensure they keep the issue of our pensions in the forefront of their minds as they seek votes from us and our families in the general election. Click on the "Lobby Your MP" link from the home page of the FBU website ([www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)), enter your postcode and your MP will pop up. Then enter your name, address and email, and "send". It takes just three clicks and two minutes.

# INDECENT HASTE ...

The union has submitted its technical response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the changes to the local government pension scheme.

These are some of the key points:

- Morale in emergency fire control rooms is already very poor, as confirmed by a study of the health of control staff in 1995. You cannot possibly improve morale and work to retain the service's most important asset, namely the staff who work for it, by cutting their pension entitlement.
- Emergency fire control room staff should be in the same pension scheme as firefighters, the firefighters' pension scheme. It is only then that they will feel that their contribution to the service is getting the recognition it deserves, concludes the health of control room staff study.
- The proposals are proceeding with indecent haste. Changes to retirement ages are due to be introduced in England and Wales one year earlier than in Scotland and one year earlier than in the case of the other public sector schemes. Members of the LGPS think they are being unfairly picked on.
- The actuarial assumptions used to calculate the cost of the LGPS by each administering authority are not published. But what is known is that the period used for amortising the deficit varies from 15 to 30 years. A consistent approach to change with such wildly inconsistent bases for valuing the scheme is simply not possible.
- Current fire and rescue service employees joined the service believing that they would receive a decent pension at the end of their careers. If such fundamental changes are going to be made to their expectations then the initiative should come from the fire and rescue service, for policy reasons connected to the service. They should not be driven by the Treasury.

READ the full FBU submission at [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)



## HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS!



■ Received a response from your MP? Let us know.

Members are asked to forward copies of any responses from MPs to John McGhee, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston Upon Thames, KT2 7AE or by email to [pensions@fbu.org.uk](mailto:pensions@fbu.org.uk)



*Isle of Wight retained staff ride the 100ft turntable ladder and drive and operate not only the sky lift with a hydraulic platform of 80ft, but also the rescue tender and the instant response unit used for civil resilience against terrorism*

In a community that has to rely entirely on its own resources to protect itself, the unique nature of the Isle of Wight Fire Service recalls more noble times and gives it its great strength and durability

# THE REAL WIGHT STUFF

**A**S A senior manager for Southern Water Richard Cullen has his hands full looking after waste water disposal for the Isle of Wight – and that’s before he’s answered any alerts from Newport’s South Street Fire Station. With the station’s average of 40 shouts a month, Richard’s time – and sleep – can be very much at a premium.

“Recently, I was going out on a Friday night with my girlfriend, after a long day at work and my bleeper went off – end of night out! The next day we’re going into town again – this time to do some shopping – and I got another alert.

“So not only was I tired from the night before but my girlfriend was less than pleased. Couple this with the shouts that come through in the middle of the night – when you’ve got to get up for work the next day and be out of the house by half six – and you can see how tough it can be.”

Such are the attempts to try to balance the sometimes impossible task of doing two jobs and maintain a family life. With the fire service presenting its own challenges in terms of hours on call and the unpredictable and very often unsociable nature of the work, imagine the firefighter who also earns his living in a high-pressure environment during the day.

Richard Cullen has been in management with Southern Water for over 15 years and has responsibility for a team of 13.

“Employers are demanding much more of their employees than they were 20 years ago when I joined the service,” he says. “I do 40 to 50 hours a week as a mechanical and electrical section leader and then we’re contracted to make 75% of all calls with the average being one shout a day. It is a struggle at times.”

Matt Arnell, who’s been in the service nine years, has three jobs. Trained as a science teacher, he’s a supply teacher to middle schools, as well as working part time for the fire service carrying out operational support. “I find it a very interesting and challenging job and, more importantly, it fits in with the lifestyle I want to lead,” he says.



Matt is also involved with the community fire safety department, where he combines his teaching skills with his fire fighting knowledge by visiting local schools to talk about fire prevention.

"Apart from the 3am calls I really enjoy being a retained firefighter. Plus I feel like I'm giving something back to my local community."

The Isle of Wight is different from most other fire services in the UK with nine of the 10 stations on the island being fully retained. As only 5% of firefighters are whole-time the local community is almost totally reliant on men and women like Richard Cullen and Matt Arnell turning out in times of emergency.

But the island relies in large part on seasonal tourism to create jobs, so employment often has to be found some distance from the fire station. Many islanders make the trip to the mainland every day, so earning a living and supporting a family can be hard.

Jackie Mouat, leading retained firefighter and also in charge of admin at the Newport station for her full time job, knows that the main challenge for a retained-based fire service is its ability to give rapid cover.

"How quickly firefighters can get to the station is key. In the old days on the island the retained personnel lived and worked in their villages. Now in order to get work people have to travel further afield. It can give us some serious headaches."

Because of the predominance of the retained side of the service – and this should come as some comfort to the local residents – the Isle of Wight has some of the most highly qualified retained firefighters in the UK.

They ride the 100ft turntable ladder, drive and operate not only the sky lift with a hydraulic platform of 80ft, but also the rescue tender and the instant response unit, used for civil resilience against terrorism.

"This brigade has no choice; we have to be ready to crew all the specials. And, bizarrely, I know for a fact that the whole-time station is under review as to whether it remains whole-time. Which would mean the island relying totally on the retained service," says Jackie.

Richard is the FBU representative for the retained service on the island, so he's fully aware of the implications for his members and his community.

"By removing the shift system you obviously increase the risk to the island. We have a very high percentage of elderly residents – with all the implications of requiring speed to get to an emergency.

"So jeopardising this station with its whole-time personnel puts the safety of the island at risk. It would be ludicrous to take it away."

The cash-strapped nature of the local fire authority and the particular demands on the fire service on the Isle of Wight have thrown up another issue which is occupying Richard's time.

Since the dispute – with retained firefighters now having the option of working 120 as opposed to 168 hours a week – the island's fire service is facing the dual problem of shortage of manpower and retained personnel not hitting their 75% of shouts.

"It's very difficult to hit your percentages, particularly if the calls come on your days off or – as we had this week – no calls for six days and then seven on one day," says Richard.

Discussions are on going between the brigade, the local authority, retained firefighters and the union.

**The Isle of  
Wight is  
different  
from most  
other fire  
services in  
the UK with  
nine of the  
10 stations  
on the  
island  
being fully  
retained**

Mark Deacon, the FBU chair on the Isle of Wight, has been working with Richard to progress the talks, the results of which are now going to be voted on by the membership.

Richard says the local fire authority expressed disappointment with the communication between the FBU, the brigade management and its employees. They consequently felt they couldn't make a ruling on the issue.

"Particularly on the Isle of Wight, with our unique conditions, we feel the fire service hasn't done enough to understand the retained firefighters – how they interact with the community they serve and the pressures of finding the correct work balance," he says.

"We often feel that we're being taken for granted as they know we love our community. They know when the bleeper goes off we'll turn in."

Richard says the retained personnel on the island may be leaning towards opting to work the 168-hour system which pays firefighters extra for the hours above 120 and believes that there is scope for local agreement to commit to 168 hours.

"We do 35 to 40 shouts a month on the island. Someone has to take those calls. If we all worked to 120 hours I think there'd be problems."

However, one of his colleagues, Andy Wren, who also works with Richard at Southern Water and has been in the service 16 years, begs to differ. "I believe working to

PICTURES: WILLIAM RAYNOR



**Richard Cullen (left)  
and Andy Wren at work  
for Southern Water**

120 hours gives us more flexibility. I'm hoping it will be less restrictive on my social life and give me a little more freedom to take time off."

The talks are as yet unresolved and the service to the Isle of Wight remains unchanged. In this close-knit community where the majority of retained firefighters are 'Caulkheads' (the term for a born and bred Isle of Wight local), the dedication to friends, relatives and fellow islanders is strong.

With jobs ranging from florist, council worker and taxi driver to teacher, the retained fire service provides one of the main social safety nets for islanders.

It's a community that has to rely entirely on its own resources to protect itself and the unique nature of the Isle of Wight fire service recalls more noble times and ultimately gives it its great strength and durability.

"I enjoy doing the job," says Richard Cullen. "I'm proud to wear the uniform and I'm passionate about the fire service. Always have been and always will be. I'd run through a brick wall for our third officer."

**T**HE introduction of cigarettes which put themselves out would cut the numbers killed in accidental house fires by a third. The technology to create “firesafe” cigarettes is available and is being introduced in New York and will be introduced in Canada soon.

But the tobacco industry – one of the world’s most effective lobbying organisations – has a history of blocking moves to introduce legislation to force them to produce firesafe cigarettes. In the US – where the industry wields enormous lobbying power – it dismissed the link between cigarettes and fire deaths as merely a “public perception”.

The UK’s latest fire statistics go out of their way to highlight the clear link between fire deaths and smouldering cigarettes. The 2003 fire statistics – published on 10 March – show that 125 people died in smoking related fires in 2003. Nine out of ten of those deaths (113) were caused by smouldering cigarettes causing fires.

In the years 1999-2003 a total of 647 people died in smoking related fires. 582 of those deaths in fires were caused by fires caused by smouldering cigarettes.

There are no hard statistics yet as to the number of outdoor fires caused by smouldering cigarettes. Most in the fire service will have direct experience of where a badly discarded cigarette is believed to have caused devastation in hot weather.

Although stub it out campaigns may have helped reduce the number of smoking related fires, the number of fire deaths caused by poorly extinguished cigarettes is not falling.

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist has written to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott asking him to back the call to introduce firesafe cigarettes. It would mean the government would hit its targets to reduce fire deaths years before schedule.

The call is part of the union’s NO2 fire deaths campaign aimed at eliminating all deaths in fires. Andy Gilchrist said: “There is no question that the latest statistics go out of their way to make the case for a significant link between smouldering cigarettes and deaths in dwelling fires. What the statistics don’t show is that it is highly likely that those who die in fires caused by smouldering cigarettes will be from the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society.

“This simple move would slash the numbers killed at a stroke. It would be a massive leap towards achieving our target of eliminating all fire deaths.

“Smoking related fires in the home are the most dangerous fires which are far more likely to kill people. They account for less than one in ten accidental fires in the home but cause a third of all accidental fire deaths in the home.

“Stub it out campaigns are reducing the number of smoking related fires but not cutting the number of smoking related fire deaths. The number of fire deaths caused by poorly extinguished cigarettes is not falling.

“If we can make furniture safer in fires we can make cigarettes safer and save hundreds of lives. I see no reason why this cannot be introduced in the UK reasonably quickly.”

Deborah Arnott, director of the health campaigning charity ASH said: “The tobacco industry has had the



# DYING

Hundreds of lives a year could  
be saved by the introduction of  
‘firesafe’ cigarettes. So what’s  
stopping government and the  
tobacco industry?





# FOR A FAG

technology to create fire-safe cigarettes for over 20 years. It is already a requirement to sell fire-safe cigarettes in New York.

"It is scandalous that tobacco companies in this country have failed to make their products less of a fire hazard. This shows their callous disregard for public safety and demonstrates the need for an independent tobacco regulatory body to force the industry to make their products fire-safe."

The role of the tobacco industry in covering up the fact that a "firesafe" cigarette which is self-extinguishing is both practical and feasible was outlined in an article in the highly respected *British Medical Journal* in October 2002 (The case for fire safe cigarettes made through industry documents by M Gunja, G Ferris Wayne, A Landman, G Connolly and A McGuire).

**The  
industry for  
many years  
denied the  
fire safe  
cigarette  
was  
feasible**

The article also showed how the tobacco industry took steps to "neutralise" opponents and influence fire safety legislation and the fire community in the United States to block change. The *BMJ* article was based on detailed information which had to be given up by the industry as part of a massive legal action brought against the industry by a number of US states.

The *BMJ* article showed that cigarette linked fires accounted for one in ten fire deaths across the world. And that the tobacco industry dismissed US data – which showed the link between property damage and fatalities caused by smoking materials – as merely a "public perception" of the relation between cigarettes and fatal fires.

The industry has actively opposed the passage of fire safe legislation, and for many years denied the fire safe

**CONTINUED OVER PAGE**

## DYING FOR A FAG

CONTINUED OVER PAGE

cigarette was feasible. The article explained how a fire safe cigarette worked: "A fire safe cigarette either has a lower propensity to ignite substrates (even though the cigarette burns its entire length) or will self extinguish when left unpuffed for an extended period."

Significant research into such a cigarette increased in the 1970s and by the end of the decade 33 patents for firesafe cigarettes had been issued in the US. The first patent had been issued in 1854.

A 15 member Congressional Technical Study Group (TSG) was set up which concluded in 1979 that it was "technically and economically feasible to produce a cigarette with a significantly reduced propensity for igniting upholstered furniture fires". The industry contested the subsequent research.

The tobacco industry had in fact pursued fire safe research for decades, and dozens of prototypes were developed. But the industry made public statements that obscured the progress of its own research, and acted to block legislative change.

During this time the industry continued to publicly claim that they either did not know how to create a firesafe cigarette or that if they did it tasted so foul no one would buy it. The *BMJ* article points to internal industry research which indicates this was not the case.

What the tobacco industry feared, the *BMJ* article suggests, was the cost of re-kitting their factories or product liability legal action brought against them if they admitted that for years they had the technology to create firesafe cigarettes.

Privately the industry was upbeat about the chances of creating such a cigarette. An internal Phillip Morris document in 1977 stated: "The question then is how might a self-extinguishing cigarette, that could be sold commercially, be developed. This does not appear to be an impossible task ... After some thought, I believe that a reasonable commercially acceptable candidate could be developed in approximately one year given a moderate priority".

This was amazingly foresighted, although the foot-dragging and denials of the industry turned a year into 23 years. In 2000 Philip Morris introduced fire safe paper technology in their Merit cigarettes.

According to the company's press release launching the new firesafe brand: "The patented cigarette paper ... has rings of ultra-thin paper that are applied on top of traditional cigarette paper during the paper making process. These rings act as "speed bumps" to slow down the rate at which the cigarette burns as the lit end crosses over them." The rest of the tobacco industry did not follow suit.

But in the same year, 2000, New York passed legislation requiring "fire safe cigarettes" by July 2003. Canada is likely to follow suit. In the UK the link between hundreds of fire deaths and cigarette-related fires is clearly established. The report in the 2003 fire statistics makes that clear: "Smoking related fires remain the most dangerous type of household fire."

The tobacco industry has almost certainly started the behind the scenes lobbying of government to block or neutralise attempts to force a move to firesafe cigarettes.

## HOW BIG TOBACCO TRIED TO NOBBLE THE US FIRE SERVICE

**From the *British Medical Journal*:  
The case for fire safe cigarettes  
made through industry documents  
by M Gunja, G Ferris Wayne, A  
Landman, G Connolly and A McGuire**

TO GIVE legislators the impression that the industry was concerned about fire safety and to quell calls for fire safe cigarettes from national fire service organisations, the Tobacco Institute embarked on a massive programme of funding fire safety organisations to provide public education about fire safety. For instance in 1990, the Tobacco Institute spent \$320 000 on grants to local fire safety organisations and other fire safety associations, while also spending \$480 000 on consulting and PR firms for fire safety issues. Seizing on the fact that fire departments nationwide were underfunded at that time, the tobacco industry saw a benefit in promoting a sense of job security among fire service employees..

The Tobacco Institute also started a vast national programme of financial aid and in-kind contributions to both local and state fire departments across the country, in an attempt to neutralise firefighter hostility toward cigarette manufacturers and their products, and quell calls for a fire safe product. In addition to extensively funding these agencies, the Tobacco Institute built alliances with key fire safety officials and organisations nationwide. Members of the Tobacco Institute sought seats on advisory boards of fire safety organisations and arranged to be listed as presenters at fire service conferences wherein they would promote tobacco industry assistance to the fire service. The Tobacco Institute also created promotional materials to tout its involvement with fire safety public education, such as calendars, brochures, advertisements, bumper stickers, and a fire safety video that institute members planned to present to legislative committees to show they were concerned about the fire safety issue. As one example, in its goals for 1987 the Tobacco Institute lists expectations of five articles placed by fire service personnel in fire journals and 200 working relationships with fire officials and other public officials on fire prevention

programmes.

By 1990, the Tobacco Institute had spread these efforts across the USA. It had developed working relationships with officials in more than 500 key fire departments across the country. Fire safety materials produced by the Tobacco Institute were being used in thousands of fire departments around the country, including those in more than 200 major cities, and its grants had been awarded to more than 85 state, regional, and national fire service organisations.

The industry considered their accomplishment of silencing the firefighting community on the issue of the self extinguishing cigarette to be one of their finest success stories. In fact, PM [Phillip Morris] exhibited the strategy as a textbook example of how to effectively neutralise a credible enemy. In a transcript of a presentation given at a PM worldwide corporate affairs meeting in 1984, PM executive Allan Miller explains:

'Who would normally be involved in the self-extinguishing cigarette on the other side of the fence? Probably the fire-fighting community. As you know in the United States, we have put a huge amount of time into helping all the organized groups of professional and volunteer fire-fighters. They get such help from us that is monumental. And then when we need them to stand up and say, it's not cigarettes that cause fire in 99.9 percent of the cases, we get their cooperation. But that's because we have cultivated them and helped them achieve some of their goals and we have seen that they are a potential enemy that has real credibility. That's the greatest credibility, your potential enemy. We had turned them around and made allies, third party defenders for ourselves. All of this involves a process of logic. To find common ground, to find your natural friends; to find your natural enemies and if possible, the ways in which you can neutralize them ...'

*Notes and links:*

[1] *British Medical Journal*: The case for fire safe cigarettes made through industry documents. *Tobacco Control* 2002; 11 (4): 346-353.

<http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/abstract/11/4/346>



# Control project would result in biggest single jobs cut in fire service

**F**IRE minister Nick Raynsford's controversial plan to close every emergency fire control in England and replace them with nine remote regional centres was still in trouble as *Firefighter* went to press. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's own figures show that 900 jobs would go as staffing levels were slashed from 1,500 to around 600. Yet the ODPM still denies the figures clearly contained in its own confidential business plan.

These would amount to the biggest single job loss ever in the UK fire service. Almost all the alleged project savings come from slashing the workforce to 600. This would leave little more than 40 people to staff each of the new controls.

This would leave – in a 24-hour 365-day service – no more than eight to ten people on shift at any one time to cover massive regions, or about one for each current brigade. In the increasingly flaky world of the ODPM control project the government tries to maintain the fiction that more staff would be available to handle calls.

The proposed cuts are so severe that calls will be routinely passed from controls which have reached saturation point to whichever control room can take the call. "Control loads will be managed by the transferring of calls to an alternative regional control with spare capacity," which could be anywhere in England, says the ODPM business plan. Calls about the same incident could be handled in almost any mixture of the nine remote regional centres.

"This will make managing our response to any major incident a nightmare," said FBU President Ruth Winters. "At present a control officer may well be present at a major incident but I don't know how they will send them from regional centres so far away."

"The fire service, for all its faults, is bloody good at what it does. If we start messing about the danger is that the wheels start to fall off. To me that is dangerous for the public and for firefighters."

It's not just those potential dangers which are ringing alarm bells across the service. If it all goes wrong – and the Government's track record suggests it will go spec-

**F**IRE minister Nick Raynsford was set for a bumpy ride at the Local Government Association's fire conference in Portsmouth as all his old certainties about cost savings evaporated. No longer was the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister maintaining the fiction that the control project will definitely save money.

It only had the "potential" to save money. Presumably on the same basis that a bet on the lottery has the potential to make millions.

Fire authorities are focusing on the high risks and high costs of the project and the lack of any clear plan as to how it will work.

No doubt they will also point to the fact that the ODPM has the worst overspending record of any government department – a cool £1.6 billion.

The risks associated with the project show it is an enormous gamble while "existing arrangements for delivering core services (including call-taking and dispatch functions) is perceived to be excellent." (ODPM business case, Page 11, paragraph 30).



**Get these postcards from your regional FBU office and lobby your MP. For more on the campaign visit [www.controlcare.org.uk](http://www.controlcare.org.uk)**

"There is a clear and obvious danger that the fire service will be lumbered with regional control money pits," said Ruth Winters. "And the money to pay for them will have to come from either increased council tax, cuts in the fire service or a combination of the two."

"The 900 job cuts and this entire madcap scheme are an issue for the whole service, not only those in fire controls. We need to fight this together."

tacularly wrong – then the increased costs will eat into frontline services and push up council tax.

This is explicitly stated in the outline business case which warns: "Failure to deliver economies would reduce the resources available to further service aims and objectives, and might impact on Council Tax" (page 52 paragraph 142). Again, in the flaky world of the ODPM fire control project, both these claims are denied.

## TWO MINUTE CAMPAIGN

**TAKE two minutes to tell your MP this project is a mistake. Simply log on to [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk) and go to "Lobby your MP". All you need do is put in your postcode, the campaign kit will work out who your MP is and you can send him or her a pre-prepared letter outlining concerns.**

**It's that simple and it takes less than two minutes of your time. It's worth it.**

The main thrust of the UK fire and rescue service modernisation agenda is cuts-driven,  
says Jack Ford. He highlights the stress faced by  
officers tasked with implementing change amid  
the service's new institutions and priorities.



# Hidden ag

**"MODERNISATION"** means different things to different people, depending on their affiliations. Its meaning is also significantly influenced by group politics and ambition – and compounded by internal politics within these groups.

Each of the groupings within the UK fire and rescue service would argue that their motives are service-driven and honourable.

Accepting that all organisations may have many decent individual members, in the end deeds speak louder than words. Agendas are often delivered by opportunistic individuals driven by personal ambition and power rather than the good of the service and safety of the public. We will have to live with the consequences of their actions or inactions.

Take the abolition of fire service institutions like the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC) and the Fire Safety Advisory Board (FSAB).

The government claimed it was replacing archaic public bodies that were slow to deliver. Instead this was deliberate change in the balance of power by a government frustrated by its inability to influence the agenda either directly or through local government.

Certainly, the CFBAC was often slow to deliver. But that was because of a lack of will or resources to implement – even when agreed – the arrangements for improving conditions and safety for members and the public sought by the FBU.

The FSAB, unlike the CFBAC, was part a new structure operating with 'modern' terms of reference, involving many professional and representative stakeholders. Like the CFBAC, though, it was an arena in which the FBU was successful: so it had to go!

The CFBAC was replaced by the practitioners forum, which was set up and controlled by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to deliver its agenda.

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) would claim that it controls and influences the process. But none of those who attended the early meetings, in particular, could deny the blatant string-pulling by ODPM officials that prevented the proper chairing of a meeting of so-called 'equal' stakeholders?

The word 'equal' is misleading. In reality many stakeholders are neither representative, accountable nor mandated, but there by invitation to influence the consensus.

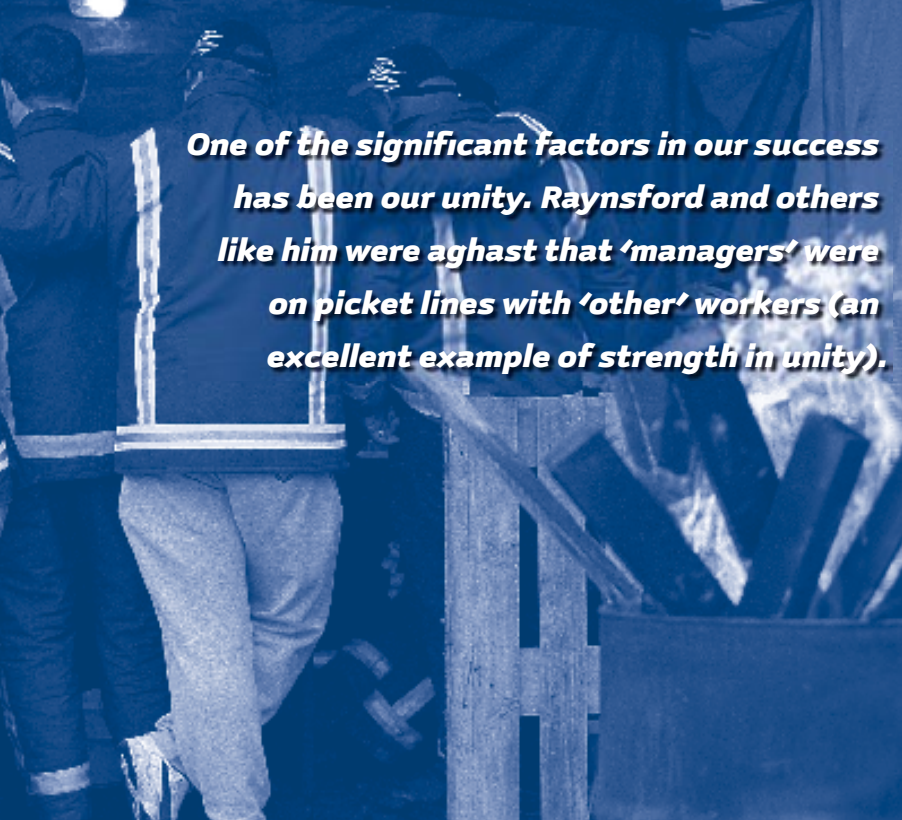
A similar arrangement was planned for the National Joint Council (NJC), with the forced inclusion of other groups and the introduction of the Middle Managers Committee.

This was a thinly veiled attempt to marginalise officer members. The government has not given up on this plan, as it is actively encouraging the employers to overturn those elements of the June 2004 pay and conditions agreement that demand membership of the NJC only be allowed through a proper democratic process, success-



*JACK FORD is executive council member for officer members*





***One of the significant factors in our success has been our unity. Raynsford and others like him were aghast that 'managers' were on picket lines with 'other' workers (an excellent example of strength in unity).***

PAUL MATTISON/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

# genda

fully negotiated by the FBU. Indeed, the changes being sought in the NJC represent a good example of the intent, either directly or by threat, of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This gives ministers powers to impose upon the service any crazy ideas dreamt up by them or their advisors.

The FiReControl project is another example of power shifting, wrapped up in thinly disguised efficiency and resilience improvement.

The project is being promoted by a government that is acutely aware of the impact that emergency fire control staff can have in an industrial relations arena and which is seeking to gain control by reducing their number and isolating them from brigades.

The union wants efficient fire control provision that is properly specified, funded and resourced. This would offer the best outcome for our members and the public alike. And we would all wish to see proper resilience provision in place.

However that is not what is happening and everyone involved knows it.

Local politicians through chief officers to the practitioners tasked with delivering it know this not to be the case.

This is an obscene rush to deliver a poorly defined and ill-specified, political expedient using a business case that has at least one 'coach and horses' on every page. If the motives were sound then why has the business case

**Modernisation  
was on the  
agenda  
despite the  
pay dispute,  
although it  
suits many  
to blame  
the union  
leadership  
for what they  
claim to be  
poor outcomes**

not come first? Why will we never know just how much it is costing?

Many of the strategic and technical arguments don't stand up to scrutiny. There are countless consultants and advisors employed, behind closed doors, to 'make it work'.

Many hundreds of work hours are being used up needlessly because the concept and process is so badly flawed.

Then take the integrated risk management plan (IRMP) process. This is cynically cost driven. If it were service-driven, then the Pathfinder route would have been developed and resourced to achieve real economic efficiencies and risk-based improvements. Whatever the outcome it will be our members that deliver the best they can for the public.

The June agreement should have signalled a period of rebuilding in line with an agreed policy and process defined by the new grey book. The grey book has only ever been an agreement between honourable people and served as a set of minimum standards upon which to ensure industrial peace and afford opportunity upon which to improve conditions for our members. Like all such agreements it relies on people, on both sides, conducting themselves honourably.

In that brief moment when we all breathed a sigh of relief as the pay agreement was signed, some of us may have allowed ourselves to believe that honour would re-emerge.

However we are now seeing CFOs and employers trying to reinterpret those agreements – and implement worse policies locally before new ones are properly in place.

You will all be aware of attempts to implement 'new' discipline procedures, 'new' duty systems and rank-to-role arrangements – to name only a few – despite or ahead of national agreements, then wilfully ignoring grievance and collective issue (dispute in old money) procedures.

Where this is happening they have clearly judged that they can get away with it, for now at least.

All of these moves are about political – or in some cases – personal gain: delivering the service on the cheap through staff cuts and isolating and silencing the employees who remain.

Depressed? That's exactly the effect that they intended to have. They want a demoralised workforce that will give in. The consequences for members are fairly obvious and none more so than if we give up the fight. What are the effects on members? Many of them are not new.

What will new duty systems 'forced' upon an unwilling workforce, resulting in fewer people with the same if not higher workloads, in the name of efficiency, do to improve this situation? Not a great deal. Surely 'the professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service,' as CFOA likes to call itself, recognises that? Well we shouldn't hold our breath.

There was a fleeting moment when, towards the end of the dispute and after many months of asking, when a small number spoke up on behalf of the service and its employees. But all too soon it's back to the old agenda.

We have all been through difficult times but let's be clear about what we did achieve despite what some,

**CONTINUED OVER PAGE**

# Hidden agenda

## FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

including a small number from within, would have you believe.

- A negotiated national agreement on pay and conditions
- A 'new' grey book incorporating many improvements
- Average pay increases for firefighter members of 16% over the last two years
- 19.7% for control members over the same period
- 23% for members working the retained duty system
- Competent firefighter on a basic pay of £25k pa, with opportunity to increase earnings
- Pay relationship between emergency fire control staff – most of them women – increased from 92% to 95%
- Full parity for firefighters working the retained duty system
- A new pay formula that will ensure that increases fully reflect those in the associate professional and technical pay classification of the UK economy. This link establishes that we are professional workers and that our pay rises should reflect it.

All of this was achieved in the most difficult of circumstances against the background of a determined and quite ruthless and morally bankrupt government.

Also be clear that much of this was on the agenda despite the pay dispute, although it suits many to blame the policies, strategies and timing of the union leadership for what they claim to be poor outcomes.

The views held internally often differ significantly from those held elsewhere. It is easy to be overly self critical and for this to be exploited. Reassessment and adaptation is a good thing and very much in the FBU's programme.

Ironically, external academic and practitioner professionals in the area of industrial relations and related politics believe that the FBU has delivered a successful and significant outcome. Particularly as we have remained intact and are able to continue to deliver, develop and influence on behalf of our members.

One of the significant factors in our success has been our unity. Raynsford and others like him were aghast that 'managers' were on picket lines with 'other' workers (an excellent example of strength in unity).

They continue to try to undermine that very unity, ably assisted by the disgraceful antics of some senior officers. We must not be deceived by the smoke and mirrors of those with an agenda that is not in our interest.

The key to successfully meeting the challenges that lie ahead and providing that vital support for our members is to build on that unity and actively support each other.

If as FBU members (and officers included) we fail to stay focused and, importantly, involved, the price will be that we are all subjected to the agenda of those who do.

**We must not  
be deceived  
by the smoke  
and mirrors of  
those with an  
agenda that  
is not in our  
interest**

## Officers on modernisation

*In my brigade, we are trying to do the best but the pressure from the ODPM and the LGA is to cut what can be cut*

**Mike Feher**

Station Officer, fire safety, Gloucestershire fire and rescue service and region 13 ONC rep

*There are serious concerns at the planned additions to our statutory duties. It is piling on more and more responsibility but without the money to fund it all.*

**James Wood**

Assistant Divisional Officer, Lothian and Borders fire and rescue service, and Region 1 ONC rep

*Look, IRMPs could work really well. The idea is sound from a professional point of view, but it's being perverted into a cuts-based agenda and not a risk-based agenda. I just hope it's a short-term knee-jerk reaction but it needs to be turned around so it really can serve the public.*

**Mick Flanagan**

Assistant Divisional Officer, South Wales fire and rescue service, and region 8 ONC rep

*ODPM are marginalising everyone in a uniform, even the chiefs. Officers with expert experience, and they do exist, are simply not listened too. It's all run with Whitehall backstabbing and Yes Minister style manoeuvring. It's not being run for the public, they are hardly mentioned. They have lost sight of the purpose of the fire service.*

**Julian Sears**

Divisional Officer, Luton and Bedfordshire fire and rescue service, and region 9 ONC rep

*ODPM can't run a bath. The last fire minister who understood the fire service was Mike O'Brien when it was at the Home Office.*

**John Allen**

Station Officer, fire safety planning, West Yorkshire fire and rescue service, and region 4 ONC rep





# STRESS: CAUGHT BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

OFFICERS are 'claimed' by both sides. Management for the most part expects individuals to be completely loyal and unquestioning, however they are treated. On the other hand friends and colleagues expect support and unity.

Individually or in small groups, officers are required to develop and implement policies and processes they often do not agree with. Putting your head down and not speaking out is often perceived as being the better part of valour and the most likely damage limitation route for career development. Where individuals are judged to have strong views or are in larger groups, other ways are found to disenfranchise them and there are many examples of that.

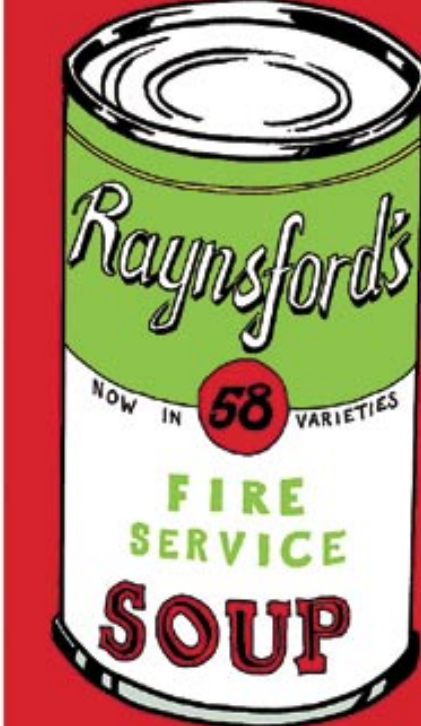
This is of course what they want because it undermines the ability to have influence. What is certain is that individuals can suffer quite badly in their professional, personal, and private lives as a consequence of the competing pressures they often find themselves under. Personal health, relationships and beliefs suffer as a result.

An independent survey 'Stress in officers in the UK fire service' undertaken during 2003-4 by the Robens Centre largely before any 'modernisation' found that:

- Officers believe there is over-bureaucratic organisation
- Pressures of running brigades as a business

rather than a service

- Insufficient authority to match responsibility
- Unsympathetic management
- Tortuous promotion system
- "The majority think they have far too much work ..."
- "... a significant number believe they are either not coping or are allowing jobs to pile up and not get completed"
- "The overwhelming view is that the job involves trying to deal with too many issues at once. A large number of respondents do not think they get sympathetic support from their line manager ..."
- "Almost half do not complete their work within normal working time and have to work extra hours, which they believe causes problems in their home life"
- "Organisational factors are clearly a cause of stress for officers"
- "Officers do not cope with stress very well and do not employ the typical coping strategies used by others. This may be because some of these coping mechanisms ... are not available to them"
- "Despite the self perception that they are generally healthy there is evidence that mental and physical health is adversely affected by the levels of stress".



# NATIONAL STANDARDS

The union moved to shape a key aspect of the fire and rescue service agenda with a seminar in the House of Commons on February 28 that brought together a variety of stakeholders to consider the union's IRMP strategy and fire safety policy

## FBU throws down IRMP gauntlet to stakeholders

**T**HE "Local Standards – A National Issue" seminar was sponsored by the all-party parliamentary fire safety group. It provoked lively debate and highlighted concerns about the direction of the new integrated risk management process.

The one-day event involved presentations from government, insurers, business and experts in risk management and law in the morning. An afternoon debate was led by FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist and Ken Knight, Commissioner for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, and chaired by Labour's Mick Clapham, a joint chair of the all-party Parliamentary Fire Safety Group.

A wide range of national and local politicians attended, including members of fire and rescue authorities. From the union, in addition to the general secretary, assistant general secretary Mike Fordham, national officers and a number of executive council members took part. It was clear from the day that there was broad agreement on the benefits of risk management of fire. But views varied widely on how it was being implemented.

The new vulnerability of fire and rescue authorities to legal action, due to the many new responsibilities devolved to them, was highlighted. Some important commitments from the government were made on the implications of the Building Disaster Assessment Group (BDAG) research survey (*Firefighter* March 2005). The union, meanwhile,

threw down the gauntlet to other stakeholders to get on board the FBU's campaign for national standards for risk-based emergency response planning.

Some of the key points made on the day were:

**Chris Hanks, General Manager, Allianz Cornhill Commercial (insurers):**

- "It is not the time to withdraw fire coverage."
- "Insurers fear that as budgets are squeezed that cuts are made."
- "IRMPs are good, 58 different versions are bad."
- "Make changes and we become extremely concerned."
- "We need good fire protection and response to big risks."
- "You may find fire (insurance) cover at today's competitive and attractive premiums withdrawn"

**Denis O'Brien, Fire Safety Advisor to the Confederation of British Industry:**

- "Before we start looking for savings, let's make sure we get it right."
- "It is important for government to listen to the fire service and those who work in it."
- "The government needs to let the fire service make the decisions."
- "The fire service does offer a high quality service, it is authoritative and it is successful."





# NOT 58 VARIETIES

## **Sir Graham Meldrum CBE, HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services:**

Commenting on BDAG research, which shows that assumptions about what is 'humanly possible' – and upon which current standard operating procedures and emergency response planning are based – are wrong, he said:

- The importance of research is that "you cannot put it back in the bottle."
- "It (the BDAG report) simply cannot gather dust."

## **Martin Seaward, barrister:**

- "Massive responsibilities have been delegated to fire and rescue authorities."
- "(In the past) the ODPM had a supervisory role helped by the fully staffed HMI and access to the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC). The fire inspectorate has been reduced in size and CFBAC abolished. By and large, elected councillors who take decisions don't have the benefit of that (expert) knowledge." Hence a real concern about a "significantly reduced level of experience (of fire service issues) at a local level"
- "Financial savings drive decisions at local level"
- "Statistics and targets are disguising a drop in standards"
- "Changes to fire cover without sufficient evidence"
- "With the safety blanket of the national standards removed, legal challenges (to Fire Authorities and their leaders) could be round the corner if somebody dies or property damaged (following cuts under an IRMP)."

## **John Cronin, Arthur D Little, (risk management experts) :**

- Under the new IRMP process, "it is essential to avoid situations which could motivate or pressurise fire-fighters to act unsafely in the interests of saving life."
- "These situations can be avoided by ensuring that

arrival times of fire engines are considered as part of the response planning process – and that the arrival time includes the relative arrival time of different appliances

- "Research has found that there is a statistically robust relationship between fire and rescue service attendance times at dwelling fires and fatality rates at those fires."
- Experience of other industries using risk management, such as rail and offshore, suggests fire and rescue service may move back to national standards.

## **Andy Gilchrist, FBV General Secretary:**

- The ODPM has promoted the new risk-based system but it is a system that is today in far too many places around the country geared towards cuts, turning one of the UK's finest public services into a fire and rescue service by postcode lottery.
- "New targets introduced by the government exclude fire deaths where the fire is judged to have been started deliberately at a time when we see a significant rise in the numbers of fires which have been started deliberately, and rising deaths from these fires. The real danger is that as a result of these narrow targets, response planning will not take place in any meaningful way."
- "While we work with other agencies to reinforce the principles of citizenship in the UK, we must also ensure that we are able to deal effectively with the fallout of anti-social behaviour and deliberate fire-setting."
- "The time it takes the fire and rescue service to get to these incidents will always be the first critical factor in our ability to limit the destructiveness of fire – and the number of firefighters sent is the other critical factor."
- "The way forward for the 21st century fire and rescue service in the UK is risk-based response planning which supports risk-based preventative and protective activity – against a nationally agreed standard."

*A note for our younger readers: The number 57 has mystical significance to the US-based food company Heinz. Its '57 varieties' slogan was invented by the company's founder, Henry J. Heinz, in 1892 and was used so extensively in its advertising in the last century that it became part of everyday speech. Today, the firm says it produces more than 57,000 products.*

Government eventually bowed to political pressure to allow a debate on the fire and rescue service national framework document, although not on the floor of the House of Commons. The work was given to a special cross-party standing committee of MPs, all of whom were given a detailed briefing by the union ...

**T**HE union supports the new risk-based approach to planning fire and rescue service activity and resource deployment.

But this approach needs to be underpinned by a national risk-based standard and comprehensive national fire service strategy policy to replace the 1985 standards of fire cover. This is to avoid the 58 varieties of IRMPs that appear to be developing.

National standards are needed to ensure that both the public and the workforce are protected and that service provision does not degenerate into a postcode lottery for levels of prevention, detection or intervention.

The union believes that such a national standard and national strategy should have zero fire deaths as its central target.

While the commitment to further reduce fire deaths is welcome, the FBU believes that the new targets are not ambitious enough.

In 1988 the report of the community fire safety task group established five-year targets as follows:

- To reduce the number of accidental fires in dwellings by one third
- To reduce the number of accidental fire deaths by 40%
- To reduce serious non-fatal casualties by 5% year on year
- To achieve measurable annual improvement in fire safety awareness, attitudes and behaviour.

But under the government's proposed fire death reduction targets, more people could die in fires than at present, yet brigade targets still be achieved. This is because the fire reduction targets only cover reducing deaths in accidental fires in the home.

Deaths as a result of arson are specifically excluded, but fire statistics for the last 12 months show the number of deaths due to arson are rising.

The FBU believes that a target of zero fire deaths is not simply desirable but is achievable through effective planning and resourcing of preventive, protective and emergency response strategies.

It is also a simpler method of judging whether all fire deaths are being reduced and avoids the temptation of some deaths being attributed to arson simply to help hit the targets for reducing accidental deaths.

**No postcode  
lottery for  
fire safety**



■ A full copy of the document is available on [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

It is also of concern that statistics for the last 12 months show an increase in the number of accidental fire deaths. The next set of quarterly statistics need to show a reduction in the number of all fire deaths rather than showing no increase on the last quarter due to fire deaths now plateauing out at this higher level. It is crucial that any long term trend is closely monitored.

The FBU supports the introduction of meaningful national performance indicators to measure progress towards fire death reduction and other targets on a regular basis.

The union is concerned that the current national targets only become 'measurable' in the year 2010 and that no targets or indicators have been set that will require fire authorities to demonstrate that their fire and community safety activities are improving public safety standards and reducing death and injuries from fire before that date.

### IRMPS

We have serious concerns about the lack of time allowed for constructing integrated risk management plans, and the failure to pilot the IRMP process.

At national level there has to be a far more integrated and common approach to developing guidance on IRMPs and the setting of targets and best value performance indicators. (BVPIs) for fire and rescue authorities. The government needs to produce benchmark standards that fire and rescue authorities will be both guided and measured by.

### COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

The four areas of community fire safety need to be placed under the one heading of prevention but this is not a panacea for all fire problems. While undoubtedly important, it is just one element of a fire safety strategy and in itself no quick fix solution to reducing fires in buildings and deaths and casualties from fires.

CFS should not be viewed in isolation nor should it be allowed to siphon off skilled resources from other fire safety factors, notably fire safety enforcement.

### ARSON REDUCTION

As with community fire safety, arson reduction programmes have to be developed as part of an overall strategic community safety plan that develops local tactical initiatives to deal with the growing problem of arson.

The proposals for arson reduction in the framework document demonstrate a lack of understanding of what a properly developed and fully integrated arson control programme could achieve when merged with other fire safety programmes under the common title of fire prevention.

It is not purely a fire and rescue service issue. It must be approached in a fully developed partnership flowing from a comprehensive and strategic IRMP process.

Another problem has been the lack of any real co-ordination between the Home Office – which has responsibility for police and criminal matters – and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which has responsibility for fire matters.

The FBU recommends that the work and planning of the ODPM's arson control forum (ACF) should be combined with other groups such as the practitioners forum and the business and community safety forum



into one common national fire safety body. At a local level these issues should be combined into fire and rescue service IRMPs and fully resourced.

## BUILDING REGULATIONS

The building regulations offer a long-term solution to many fire safety problems in the built environment. The government says in the framework document that it is keen to improve fire safety by all reasonable means and that it will consider carefully the role of sprinklers as part of a package of measures in buildings.

We have to ask which part of government this is as not all departments seem so keen to consider sprinklers. The Department for Education and Skills is responsible for school buildings that have one of the highest fire loss rates for any type of building. Yet we understand it is positively hostile to such a proposal.

We also understand that there may be concerns about existing fire safety standards. It is a simple equation: if business saves money by lowering building fire safety protection standards, then fire and rescue authorities and the taxpayer may have to pay more to increase intervention response levels to deal with the increased risk.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

The service still needs to improve its health and safety record and the FBU needs to continue to play a full role in the improvement of health and safety standards across the whole of the service.

The union expects the fullest use and provision of facilities for worker health and safety representatives in meeting this challenge.

## NEW DIMENSION

The FBU would like to see included in the framework document a more specific explanation of how the government intends to ensure that fire authorities can meet the additional resource requirements as envisaged in the New Dimension initiative.

While the capital investment in equipment is significant and welcome, there are clear resource implications for personnel and training. Any major incident or incidents will need the response of a number of entire brigades over what may be considerable periods of time.

We have major concerns that there will simply not be enough personnel to deal properly with either the incidents themselves or their aftermath.

Continuing to seek a reduction in the numbers of the frontline service which will have to deal with such incidents will, in our view, seriously undermine the ability of the service to properly respond to such incidents. We believe such an approach is self-defeating.

We recommend an increase in wholetime personnel in the region of 2.5% (around 1,000) as the minimum needed and that the number of retained personnel be brought up to at least the full establishment.

If this does not happen, entire understaffed brigades are likely to be tied up dealing solely with such incidents as best they can with far fewer (if any) left to deal with what may be other serious incidents such as fires or flooding.

The union would also like to see significantly larger sums than currently earmarked spent on training all personnel in New Dimension incidents. We recommend a serious rethink of the current approach to both personnel and training with a view to increasing both.

## FBU AND RAYNSFORD AGREE, FOR ONCE!

*THIS was fire minister Nick Raynsford's answer to parliamentary question last month:*

**Nigel Waterson (Con, Eastbourne; Opposition spokesperson on Economic Affairs):** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the implications for tackling domestic fires if regional control centres are established; and if he will make a statement.

**Nick Raynsford:** The technology to be used in the regional control centres for the Fire and Rescue Service will automatically locate callers from the telephone network, detect the appliance with the appropriate skills and equipment which can be most quickly mobilised to the incident and direct it along the most effective route to the incident. This will help the fire and rescue service to reach all incidents, including domestic fires, quicker and so save more lives.

*No we don't agree with you on regional controls Mr Raynsford, but we applaud the fact that as fire minister you finally acknowledge, quite correctly, that reaching any emergency incident quicker, and not just fires in people's houses, will save more lives!*

# Wider FBU parliamentary group meets for first time

A WIDENED FBU parliamentary group was due to hold its inaugural meeting in March as Firefighter went to press.

General secretary Andy Gilchrist was set to attend, along with John McGhee, national officer responsible for the union's political work. Andrew Dismore MP (Lab, Hendon) is chairing the group, Michael Clapham MP (Lab, Barnsley West and Penistone) will be vice-chair and John McDonnell MP (Lab Hayes and Harlington) is expected to be secretary.

The group was to be fully briefed by Andy Gilchrist and John McGhee on our key workplace campaigns – pensions; regionalisation of emergency fire controls; retained firefighter recruitment and equality; and attacks on firefighters.

MPs in this new group have already sent letters requesting urgent talks with deputy prime minister John Prescott on the issue of FBU members' pensions and the need for a new national standard for fire and rescue service emergency response planning (see page 20).

"An effective parliamentary voice for firefighters and emergency fire control staff is greatly needed as we approach the Government's planned changes for the Fire Service," said Andrew Dismore.

"The FBU parliamentary group will be invaluable for the FBU to have an effective and co-ordinated parliamentary group consistently raising the union's concerns with Ministers and fellow MPs and using every available parliamentary channel to advance our cause. I am very honoured to be an active member of the new group."

John McDonnell said the establishment of a parliamentary group of MPs on behalf of the union provided firefighters and emergency fire control staff for the first time in the history of the FBU with an organised voice in Parliament to represent the union and its members. "We will be standing up for the rights of FBU members and the future of the Fire Service," he said.

David Drew, Labour and Co-operative MP for Stroud welcomed the development, saying he greatly valued his links with the FBU. "The previous group brought us together during the very bitter and painful pay and conditions dispute," he said.

"I was pleased to be able to make representations on behalf of that group during the path of the legislation and by lobbying government.

"I hope that this group can further bind us together so that we can make sure that the future of the fire and rescue service is properly debated and that there is better understanding of the needs of firefighters and emergency fire control operators in parliament."

The first piece of primary fire safety legislation in the UK for over 30 years is expected to come into force on 1 April 2006. John McGhee reports further on a law that the union has been working hard to get enacted since 1992.

**T**HE regulatory reform (fire safety) order, or RRO as it is more commonly known, is the final manifestation of the FBU's Fire Safety Bill, which the union first proposed in 1992. It is the first piece of primary fire safety legislation to be introduced in the UK for over 30 years.

In rationalising over 100 pieces of fire safety legislation, the order (with enforcement for the majority of premises resting with fire and rescue authorities) will help simplify the law and make fire safety requirements much easier for everyone to understand.

The order is based on the principles of risk assessment and risk reduction, in line with general health and safety legislation, which means that the most hazardous premises and workplaces can be singled out and dealt with as a priority.

The order will require that whatever fire risk is identified must be reduced to as low as is reasonably practical, with the remaining risk mitigated – one of the key elements of the FBU draft bill – and a fundamental change in emphasis in policy.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 was laid before Parliament at the end of February and is now expected to come into force on 1 April 2006.

While welcoming the introduction of the order, the FBU remains critical of the length of time it has taken for it to find its way onto the statute book.

The order will replace the Fire Precaution Act, 1971 and all the fire certificates issued under that act will cease to have effect from 1 April 2006.

From this date all responsible persons, as defined in the order, will be required to assess their own fire safety needs to comply with the requirements of the order.

Fire and rescue authorities will ensure that these duties are met and will have powers to issue enforcement notices to those who do not take their duties seriously.

# Fire safety – new law, new concerns

***The issuing of fire certificates has fallen off considerably. The union is investigating.***

GLYN Evans, the FBU's national fire safety advisor, said there was no doubt that this was an important piece of legislation.

"The order will replace fire safety legislation which has been in force for over 34 years. However, its effectiveness in real terms relies almost entirely on one significant factor – and that is its proper and ongoing enforcement by fire and rescue authorities.

"The recently issued national framework 2005/06 document advises fire and rescue authorities to ensure that they have a fire safety inspection programme in place which must form part of its IRMP.

"If they fail to take up the challenge of enforcing the order properly, then they will fail everyone and they may leave themselves open to legal challenge by doing so," said Glyn Evans.

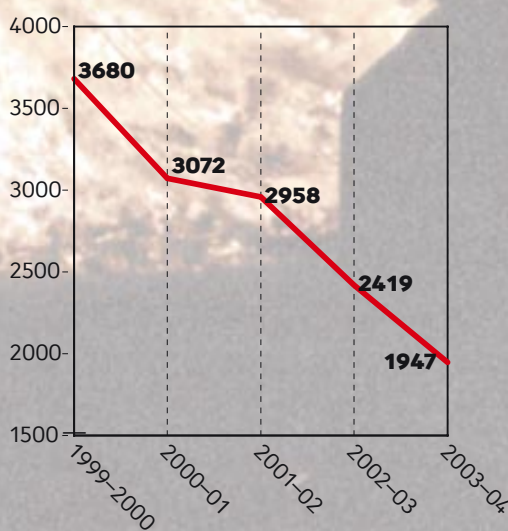
Until the order comes into force fire and rescue



A SIGNIFICANT drop in the number of fire certificates issued under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 was revealed in the written reply to a parliamentary question submitted by Michael Clapham (Lab, Barnsley West) earlier this year to fire and rescue service minister Nick Raynsford. The graph (below) and table (right) summarise his reply.

The MP also asked for the number of certificates amended and the number of exemptions from the requirement to hold a certificate that had been granted as well as the number of outstanding applications for the issue and amendment of certificates. The minister said these figures were not available.

**TOTAL FIRE PRECAUTIONS ACT CERTIFICATES ISSUED 1999-2000 TO 2003-04 (ENGLAND AND WALES ONLY)**



authorities remain under a statutory duty to inspect and issue fire certificates and enforce the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 up until 31 March 2006.

A recent parliamentary question (see above) revealed that in a number of fire and rescue authorities the issuing of fire certificates has fallen off considerably over the period measured in the question.

"We are also aware, as a result of concerns expressed to us by FBU members serving in a fire safety enforcement role, that in some fire and rescue authorities the legislative fire safety enforcement task is receiving a low activity priority and suffering significant resource reductions," said Glyn Evans.

"We are investigating these issues because they fly in the face of the statements made by ministers that the culture of the fire and rescue service must become one that is driven primarily by its fire prevention activities."

**NUMBER OF FIRE PRECAUTIONS ACT CERTIFICATES ISSUED 1999-2000 TO 2003-04 (ENGLAND AND WALES ONLY)**

Authority	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Avon	48	38	78	40	13
Beds and Luton	20	31	27	16	7
Buckinghamshire	101	76	66	52	38
Cambridgeshire	78	51	43	46	30
Cheshire	60	43	46	37	30
Cleveland	65	29	17	18	8
Cornwall	59	35	19	37	44
Co. Durham and Darlington	23	25	15	24	3
Cumbria	36	26	31	30	39
Derbyshire	75	52	33	36	24
Devon	108	128	71	49	66
Dorset	76	70	52	73	44
East Sussex	28	26	28	22	29
Essex	77	135	139	113	125
Gloucestershire	140	137	177	130	99
Greater Manchester	187	129	149	115	113
Hampshire	50	51	64	118	61
Hereford and Worcester	61	29	51	25	27
Hertfordshire	59	28	46	80	53
Humberside	103	70	59	62	46
Isle of Wight	15	9	2	3	6
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	2	1
Kent	107	84	76	67	39
Lancashire	93	58	81	38	39
Leicestershire	50	32	23	13	19
Lincolnshire	15	12	21	5	18
London	602	463	418	300	272
Merseyside	54	70	86	26	34
Mid and West Wales	99	85	55	55	31
Norfolk	31	37	38	25	23
North Wales	44	74	29	22	11
North Yorkshire	75	38	43	54	29
Northamptonshire	14	20	25	19	15
Northumberland	10	8	5	6	0
Nottinghamshire	74	43	26	25	23
Oxfordshire	87	50	28	29	22
Royal Berkshire	48	56	62	52	72
Shropshire	18	18	25	17	9
Somerset	27	21	54	29	12
South Wales	89	84	57	64	41
South Yorkshire	50	41	73	71	53
Staffordshire	89	78	51	41	24
Suffolk	14	30	14	9	29
Surrey	73	104	94	26	41
Tyne and Wear	67	51	59	46	57
Warwickshire	33	24	36	28	19
West Midlands	107	87	72	80	11
West Sussex	79	52	81	58	29
West Yorkshire	124	110	72	55	50
Wiltshire	37	24	41	31	19

**'Fire authorities should ensure that they have a fire safety inspection programme in place as part of their IRMP. If they fail they may face a legal challenge.'**

Next month the fire and rescue service will start to roll out urban search and rescue units across the UK under the New Dimension programme. Paul Matthewman



has been representing the FBU as a key stakeholder body in

implementing this new capability. He explains what it involves.



# New threats – New

**F**ollowing 9/11 and other recent catastrophic incidents across the world, it became apparent that the UK fire and rescue service was ill equipped to withstand incidents of a similar nature and scale.

Lessons learned from the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington and the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma ten years ago indicated the necessity for a resilient urban search and rescue (USAR) capability hitherto not present in the UK.

Fire and rescue services in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England have recently started to introduce a new capability.

The UK fire and rescue service has always responded to a wide range of incidents. Traditionally, though, its statutory basis was as a fire service. Now the government and devolved administrations are committed to developing a fire and rescue service with all the necessary capabilities.

This has been supplemented by the recent changes in legislation: Civil Contingencies Bill, Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Emergency Services Order.

The USAR capability should enable the UK fire and rescue service to respond to any incident involving unstable and collapsed structures caused naturally, deliberately or accidentally.

At a national level the UK fire and rescue service is today expected to be called upon to respond to two simultaneous incidents involving the collapse of severe

**The fire and  
rescue service  
is expected  
to respond  
to two  
simultaneous  
incidents  
involving  
collapse of  
high risk  
structures  
and remain in  
attendance  
for up to  
30 days**

or high risk target structures and remain in attendance for up to 30 days.

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 incident, those brigades which made up the United Kingdom fire service search and rescue team (UKFSSART) agreed to support interim arrangements to respond to identified events within the UK mainland.

Additional brigades have committed themselves to interim solutions that will provide strategically located urban search and rescue (USAR) capability.

These arrangements have been enhanced through the provision of additional vehicles, equipment, training (collapsed structure and tools skills) and interim guidance. This capability has been provided through the New Dimension programme (ND).

All key stakeholders are working together to implement the new capability through the recently formed USAR national coordination group (NCG), which includes the New Dimension programme team (Civil Resilience Directorate/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – CRD/ODPM), Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), representatives of the devolved authorities, employee representative bodies, notably the Fire Brigades Union, USAR practitioners and programme consultants SERCO, an international task management company.

The NCG has been meeting monthly since mid 2004 with the FBU represented by Pete Goulden and I. We are both regional health and safety co-ordinators. We





*Firefighters disposing of 'contaminated' protective clothing during Operation Magpie, a civil defence exercise last year based on a notional chemical weapon attack on Newcastle City Council's civic centre*

MARK PINDER/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

## WHO WILL DO WHAT ?

### LEVEL 1 – LOCAL RESPONSE

The local response level, also known as the predetermined attendance (PDA), involves normal firefighting crews and vehicles only.

### LEVEL 2 – SPECIALIST RESPONSE

A specialist response involves the PDA plus additional resources including specialist vehicles with a limited USAR capability from within the host brigade or from one or more adjoining brigades. For instance, the explosion at the Stockline Plastics factory in Maryhill, Glasgow in May last year or the explosion of ammonium nitrate in September 2001 at the AZF fertilizer manufacturing plant in Toulouse, France, that caused 30 fatalities and an estimated 10,000 injuries.

### LEVEL 3 – MUTUAL RESPONSE

The mutual response is an amalgamation of Level 1 and Level 2 response plus additional resources from outside the host fire and rescue service but probably within its own region or adjoining region (dependant on geographic proximity, i.e. travel time). An examples is the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon.

### LEVEL 4 – NATIONAL RESPONSE

A national response exists when resources are mobilised from outside the host region or adjoining regions. Such resources will then form part of a nationally co-ordinated response. An example is the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre. At this level, further resources may be likely to be called upon from other nations.

MARK PINDER/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

# Dimension

report back to the national officer for health, safety and welfare.

The NCG agreed that the ODPM will fund 19 units based in Avon, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Devon, Essex, Hampshire, Hereford and Worcester, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London (four units), Merseyside, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

Establishment levels for crewing 24/7 equates to 16 wholetime posts per unit, which are to be funded by the ODPM (304 posts for the UK fire service), with a further 14 posts on alterter response system, plus two search dogs.

Host brigades will need to provide a business case on duty systems, staffing and so on. These need to be scrutinised by NCG (including the FBU) in order to receive the funding.

The plan is to establish 13 inter-regional training facilities costing £6.5m, again fully funded by ODPM, with all UK firefighters being trained to Level 1.

USAR units are being rolled out from June 2005 in a process that is expected to take up to two years to complete. The interim USAR capability provided at the moment, on a voluntary basis, will remain. The UKFSSART teams currently operating within the UK are expected to continue, the USAR capability being fully funded over two years at a cost of £57.5m. After that time it will become a part of the fire standard spending assessment (SSA) that is allocated to local authorities to fund brigades.



*PAUL MATTHEWMAN is FBU regional health and safety co-ordinator for Yorkshire and Humberside*

## WHAT IS A USAR UNIT ?

A dedicated USAR unit will consist of:

- Three prime-mover vehicles
- Three pod-units for: 1. structural collapse, 2. major transport incident, 3. USAR support.
- One flat-bed, with all terrain vehicle and support equipment
- One flat-bed unit, with timber
- One support vehicle
- Dog van with two dogs

## Members and officials have put questions on key issues to General Secretary Andy Gilchrist. These are his answers.

### **Why did you vote at the executive council to end long service increment (LSI) payments to firefighters?**

**ANDY MITCHELL**, branch secretary,  
Bishop Auckland, Durham & Darlington

First, under the union's rules I don't have a vote on the executive council and neither does any other national officer.

Second, the employers had made clear for some time – as had been reported to our annual conference – that they did not want to continue with a payment solely based on the length of time served. The reason was that they said they had clear legal advice (and we had clear legal advice which confirmed this) that the LSI payment could face a legal challenge on the grounds of discrimination. It was a court case waiting to happen and the payments would have been ended, maybe this year, maybe next year, but certainly some time. The result would mean that the payment would have ended and the money would have been lost.

Now we were not happy with that position, but that was the position we were in.

Our strategy was to save the money on the basis that it didn't matter what it was called. The important thing is that the money goes into the pay packets of members and was not lost.

We moved from the basis of a single payment tied to 15 years service to continuing professional development (CPD) payments rewarding professional experience. This meant that the money – if not the title of LSI – was saved. All of the money that was paid in LSI (including all the increases, it has not been “frozen”) goes into the CPD pot but paid on a similar basis: professional experience.

We achieved three things: we saved all the money; some members will receive the money earlier than 15 years, in some cases a lot earlier; and people are also reaching their “competency” levels of pay earlier because payments are now linked to professional experience and not the length of service.

In addition to reaching competency payments earlier the CPD payments (all of the LSI money) will be phased in. The title “LSI” is lost but all the money associated with LSI is saved. The money in your pocket is what matters, not what it is called.

From being in a position where the LSI money was going to be lost at some stage all of the LSI money is saved and CPD payments made on the basis of professional experience.

If you are being told the money is lost, then that is simply not true.

### **But where are the CPD payments?**

**NIGEL JONES**, Carmarthen, Mid & West Wales  
LSI is not going to start being phased out until the CPD payments made up of the entire LSI “pot” start to be

phased in. The employer and union CPD teams have been set up and will deal with the creation of the new system. When that is concluded it will be put out to members for a decision.

### **Why are you only “assuming” that the payments will count towards pensionable pay? Why didn't you tie down the detail?**

**GLEN MARSHALL**, branch official, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs

The principle of CPD – payments based on professional experience – is agreed. LSI will count towards pensionable pay until it is phased out. The new CPD payments will inherit all the money from the LSI “pot”.

The FBU and the employers are working towards ensuring that the new CPD payments will be covered by the definitions of pensionable pay in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension scheme. That is our working “assumption”, the basis from which start.

That is what we have to do and it is what we are all working towards in the discussions now taking place. It is all about ensuring the money from the LSI pot goes into the pockets of members and that it is pensionable.

If you have been told the LSI money is “lost” then that is not true. All the money is saved and goes into the pot of money from which CPD payments will be made.





#### **What's the difference between CPDs and Additional Responsibility Allowances (ARAs)?**

**JIM ALLEN**, *Altrincham, GMC*

CPD payments are to reward professional experience and will be paid out of the LSI money "pot" which has grown in line with all the pay increases agreed under the June 2003 agreement. Additional Responsibility Allowances – also agreed under the June 2003 agreement – are in addition to CPD payments. ARAs will be available on a brigade-by-brigade basis and paid for specific additional responsibilities.

Put simply, before the June 2003 agreement FBU members often just took on additional responsibilities, now they will be able to ask for money in return.

#### **Was 'modernisation' brought on by the dispute?**

**ALAN PATERSON**, *brigade official, Grampian*

The government has had a "modernisation" agenda across all public services for many years. Everyone has had to face "modernisation" from doctors, police, the NHS and almost everyone in local government and the civil service.

The fire and rescue service was never an "island" separated from that agenda. Mike O'Brien, when Fire Service Minister, shared that agenda with annual conference and we have copies of the draft government white paper on the fire service from 2000.

Change was going to come. What we had was our

own agenda including pay parity for the retained, pay equality for controls, a new pay formula linked to professional earnings and a significant pay rise.

Change was going to come as it has for everyone in the public services. The only question was what we got in exchange for that change. In the past we accepted new responsibilities and in the future we are in the position where we will put a price tag on those new responsibilities.

#### **Isn't the attack on our pensions part of the June agreement?**

**RUSS KING**, *Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear*

Attacks on our pensions have been almost ongoing since 1984. The entire public service is facing attacks as are the private sector. It has nothing to do with the June agreement or our dispute.

#### **We aren't going to get the pay formula, are we?**

**STEVE HUNTER**, *Whitehaven, Cumbria*

The principles and details on which the new pay formula is based have been agreed: the average rise in the pay of professional workers. Preparatory work is already underway in time for the payments under the new pay formula to come on stream from 1 July of this year.

#### **With the new IRMPs, why is it that all we are getting is cuts?**

**MIKE WARE**, *retained member, Lincs*

We have always had cuts proposals in many brigades and in every year as a result of government-led budget cuts. Under the old Section 19 process, we were only ever partially successful in stopping cuts. Having said that, it is a disgrace that local fire authorities are using the new risk-based system to carry on their old cuts agenda and that's why we are doing all we can to get the government to introduce new national standards for emergency response planning.

#### **Thanks to the June pay agreement we've seen loads of new duty systems coming in.**

**KEVIN HERNIMAN**, *brigade secretary, Avon*

We've always had a wide variety of duty systems – perhaps as many as 50 – in the UK fire service. What's different now is that we have a proper mechanism through which they can be challenged. In the future, any changes have to be by agreement and if agreement cannot be reached, then they can be referred to the Technical Advisory Panel (our only experience of TAP has been in Merseyside and it appears that members there are not displeased with the outcome). Of course, if members feel very strongly about proposed changes, there is the tried and tested industrial route.

#### **Aren't you too close to government?**

**OONAGH SPEED**, *fire control, Lincs*

I have as much reason to dislike this government as anyone else in the FBU. But to serve FBU members properly and professionally the union must have a relationship with any government in order to discuss your concerns with them. I think your pensions and regional control issues, for example, are important enough to you and to me for the union to do all we can to influence the decision makers. The FBU has always taken that approach. The real danger is walking away from that process, not engaging in it.



**Andy  
Gilchrist:  
Pay formula  
money  
coming on  
stream from  
July 1**

# Thanks to those

FOLLOWING my recent election as assistant general secretary, I would like through the pages of *Firefighter* to convey my thanks to FBU members for their support. It is a tremendous honour to be elected to such a position, and I am aware of the great responsibility that comes with the job.

The last two and a half years have been an immensely trying time for the FBU. We have been pitted against a set of employers and a government that have tried their utmost to do damage to our union, and to diminish any influence that we have in the UK fire service. There are no signs of their confrontational approach abating, as the cuts agenda continues to threaten the provision of fire cover throughout the country under the guise of IRMPs.

We too face battles on other fronts. Our pensions – along with those of millions of other public sector workers – are under attack. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme and Local Government Pension Scheme have both been targeted. The government wants us to work longer for no extra benefit, and to make it harder for firefighters to retire when they are no longer fit to carry out their role. Such an assault is deplorable, and must be keenly fought.

The regionalisation of control centres gives more cause for concern. In reality, it is a hare-brained scheme, driven by a desire to save money, and with little regard for the welfare of our members or the general public. Leaked reports have revealed that the government itself has admitted that the whole thing could end in catastrophe.

It really is a sad indictment that after 18 years of resisting Tory cuts, we have had to endure a further eight years of attacks by a Labour government, and it reinforces the justness of our decision at last year's annual conference to disaffiliate from the Labour party. No longer should our members' contributions blindly be paid to an organisation that has tried so hard to undermine us. We can now afford to be more particular about who we fund, and it is my view that only candidates and organisations whose principles and policies are broadly harmonious with those of the FBU are worthy of our support.

Despite the trials of the last two years, our union remains intact. It would be disingenuous, however, to pretend we haven't taken several hits. In some cases the damage has been deep and lasting. Bitter industrial struggles throw up a myriad of differing opinions and divisions often appear. Our pay dispute was no different in this respect. Difference of opinion is by itself nothing to be ashamed of. It is part and parcel of what we are about as trade unionists, and we should always seek to foster – rather than discourage – an atmosphere in which democratic discussion and debate can thrive. This is just as important when a union has its back to the wall as when things are going well. What has absolutely no place in any trade union – and we haven't



**London regional secretary Matt Wrack received the most votes in the ballot for assistant general secretary. Matt Wrack, who was elected as London Regional Secretary in September 2004, is expected to start his new job at head office in September. Current AGS Mike Fordham has served the union in this post since 1982 and at a national level since 1979.**

been immune from this either – is personal abuse. Such abuse is not only wrong and destructive, but it does nothing to engage the thousands of members throughout our union who are looking for a lead in difficult times.

I offer my best wishes to the two other candidates in the AGS election, Bro Dean Mills and Bro John McGhee. I've no doubt I will be working closely with them both in the future. I also pay tribute to the outgoing AGS, Bro Mike Fordham, who will retire in September. Mike has served as assistant general secretary for over 20 years, and I know the entire union would wish him a long and happy retirement.

Ours is a fine trade union, which for the best part of eighty years has championed the cause and defended the rights of those it has represented. Our record since our formation in 1918 is one of which we can be proud. The motley collection of alternatives on offer – such as the RFU – do not even run us close. That's not to say we've been without our troubles or our internal disagreements. Such things are the everyday stuff of the trade union movement. But when the entire union membership – wholetime, retained, officers, control staff and minority sections – pulls in the right direction, we are truly a force to be reckoned with.

Officials come and go, but the members will always be there. They remain the lifeblood of the union, without whom the union simply wouldn't exist. No official must ever forget that. Unions are collective organisations, where each member has the right to express a view and each member a duty to listen to alternative views. Thereafter, the view of the majority prevails, and our personal viewpoint – whilst we should always be free to argue it – subordinates itself to the collective decision. Democracy, accountability, transparency – easy to talk about, more difficult to put into practice. All three must be our goal, combined with a fighting and campaigning union that gives no quarter when it comes to defending members' pay and conditions.

I stood in the election on a very clear platform. I intend to repay the trust that you have placed in me by honouring my election pledges and fighting hard for the interests of FBU members for the next five years. Once again, thanks for electing me.

**Matt Wrack**



**FBU CONFIDENTIAL STRESS  
AND SUPPORT LINE**

**0800 783 4778**

**Don't be bullied, don't get stressed,  
get help from the FBU free service**



# who voted

I WOULD like to thank the 5,500 members who voted for me in the recent election for AGS. This, however, was not a sufficient number in order for me to be elected to the job. My congratulations to Matt Wrack who secured 6,200 votes. I wish him every success when he takes up his post in September (unless, that is, he is elected to the post of GS which he is now standing for!).

My reasons for writing this letter are two-fold.

Firstly, I feel it necessary to address a number of issues which arose during the election but which at the time I was unable to comment on. In the elections addresses of both candidates there were issues which I believe were either directly or indirectly aimed at me. In Dean Mills' address he suggested that improvements to the accident and injury fund that I suggested to the national executive council (EC) in October 2004 – and which were agreed by the EC, including Dean Mills, in December 2004 – were not permanent but a “temporary election bribe.” Members should know that I first raised this issue following last year's annual conference and was tasked by the General Secretary Andy Gilchrist, as part of my job, to review the evident surplus in the AIF fund and make proposals for the future.

Further, Matt Wrack stated that he would publish his expenses. I believe that by implication he suggests that others are not open and transparent about expenses. The process for claiming expenses as a union official anywhere in the Union are laid down by auditors and the national treasurer. Should I have cause to claim



**National Officer John McGhee: The AGS election saw just one in four members voting. All members should vote in the coming democratic elections – including that of General Secretary – because apathy does nothing to strengthen a union**

expenses I, like all other officials, must account in detail for them by the provision of receipts. Claim forms are checked and then authorised by two different officials, ensuring a robust accounting of members' money.

Matt Wrack also stated that he would “accept a wage based on the average earnings of FBU members”. Some may find this refreshing and admirable. However, when I accepted the job as national officer I signed a contract, which laid out my pay and conditions of employment. My salary was that of a Divisional Officer III and has been set at that level for over 20 years. I can inform you that there has been no increase outwith the pay formula since any of the current head office officials, including Mike Fordham, who has been here for 22 years, took up their post.

The second major issue I wish to address is the number of members taking part in the election process. This gives me great concern. One in four members returned their ballot papers. There are, I am sure, many reasons as to why. I am sure that Matt and Dean would agree that participation in democratic elections is something we must encourage.

Apathy does nothing to strengthen a union.

Members should participate and encourage colleagues to do likewise in the election of those who seek to lead and represent them.

I sincerely hope that whoever wins the election for General Secretary secures a large percentage of your votes. Democracy is transparent. Participate please.

**John McGhee**

THANKS to those branches who nominated and voted for me in what was an important election for all members.

It is the right of all members to stand in elections and I hope our members who have an interest in the union will not only increase their participation in the FBU but also stand in elections at all levels. There is little point in talking about democracy if we fail to take an active part in it.

I would like to congratulate Matt on his election success and I look forward to seeing him take up his post in Head Office and working with him.

There were those who during the election sought to undermine the democratic process and that should never be accepted by any member or official. I trust that in the future we will see a more transparent open process for the benefit of all members.



**Dean Mills: I hope all members will participate in the election**

We now have two options open to us. Look back and ignore the lessons of the past as some seem to wish to do; or look forward and take the lessons we have learnt and build upon the positives we saw. The unity among members at the beginning of our fair pay claim being an outstanding example of what the FBU is able to achieve when we work together.

Together we face another election and I sincerely hope all members will participate in the election and return a greatly increased turnout. This union belongs to its members on branches, in control rooms, and working in our local communities. It is vital that members vote and participate to move the union forwards in the direction they wish to see it go. This union belongs to YOU. Make your voice heard and use your vote.

**Dean Mills**



## ON THE MOVE?

**Members are reminded to advise their Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address. Head Office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.**

# 0808 100 6061 FBU

## freephone legal advice line



THOMPSONS  
SOLICITORS



The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

### For further help and advice on union services contact your regional office

Regional Office	Address	Telephone No.	Email address
<b>Region 1</b> Scotland	52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow, Scotland, G1 4AA	0141 221 2309	01rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 2</b> N. Ireland	14 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT7	02892 664622	02rs@fbu.org
<b>Region 3</b> Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear	1 Carlton Court, 5th Avenue, Team Valley, Gateshead, NE11 0AZ	0191 487 4142	03rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 4</b> Yorkshire and Humberside	9 Marsh Street, Rothwell, Leeds, LS26 0AG	0113 288 7000	04rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 5</b> Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Isle of Man, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire	The Lighthouse, Lower Mersey St, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 2AL	0151 357 4400	05rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 6</b> Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire	Mill 3, Unit H3B, Pleasley Vale Business Park, Off Outgang Lane, Pleasley, Nr Mansfield, Nottingham, NG19 8RL	01623 812290	06gen@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 7</b> West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester, Salop	195/7 Halesowen Rd, Old Hill, West Midlands, B64 6HE	01384 413633	07rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 8</b> Gwynedd, Clwyd, Dyfed, Powys, Glamorgan, Gwent	Units 38 – 40, Port Talbot Bus. Units, Addison Road, Port Talbot, SA12 6HZ	01639 871013	08rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 9</b> Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk	28 Atlantic Square, Station Road, Witham, Essex, CM8 2TL	01376 521521	10ra@fbu.org.uk 09rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 10</b> London	John Horner Mews, Frome Street, Islington, London, N1 8PB	020 7359 3638	london@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 11</b> Kent, Surrey, Sussex	Fire Station, Coldharbour Road, Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8NT	01474 320473	11rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 12</b> Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset, Oxfordshire, Isle of Wight	The Fire Station, St Mary Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 2HE	01494 513034	12rs@fbu.org.uk
<b>Region 13</b> Cornwall, Somerset, Devon, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire	158 Muller Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9RE	0117 935 5132	13rs@fbu.org.uk

## on the move?

office@fbu.org.uk  
www.fbu.org.uk

